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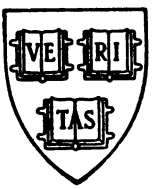

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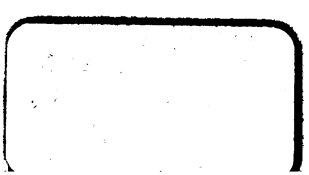

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TOLLA

A TALE OF MODERN ROME

BY EDMOND ABOUT.

TRANSLATED BY L. C. C.

SECOND EDITION.

EDINBURGH: THOMAS CONSTABLE AND CO.

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PUBLISHERS' PREFACE.

In consequence of the discussion which has arisen in France, regarding the originality of the following tale, and the charge of plagiarism brought against its author by more than one literary Journal, we have been desirous to obtain a copy of the Italian work from which M. About is said to have borrowed the charming narrative of Tolla, in order that we might be enabled to inform the public to what extent he has availed himself of its pages.

We have been unsuccessful. Its disclosures were so dishonouring to an illustrious Roman family, that the edition was suppressed immediately after publication. Not a copy is now to be procured.

Tolla, as stated by M. About in the concluding chapter of the work, is founded on incidents which actually occurred in Rome some eighteen years ago, of which a record was printed in 1841, by the father of the unhappy heroine; and we are informed by Messrs. Hachette, the Parisian publishers, that M. About has raised Actions at law, for Defamation, against the proprietors of those Journals which have ventured to assail his character. The judicial results of these trials will, doubtless, soon be made known.

Edinburgh, 13, Thistle Street,
Nov. 30, 1855.

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TOLLA.

CHAPTER I.

THE Feraldis are not actually a princely family, but they may well claim equality with many such. Alexander Feraldi, Count of the Holy Empire, Baron of Vignano, Knight of the order of Constantine, was one of the sixty patricians whose names are inscribed on the tables of the Capitol. He had always declined to enter into the pontifical army, in which his father was Lieutenant-Colonel. Delicate health, together with the grave character of the education he had received at the Nazareth College, and, above all, the necessity of setting to rights the affairs of his family, led him to embrace the legal profession. The times are past, indeed, when in each Roman there existed the proper material, alike for soldier, jurisconsult, or labourer; but the patricians have at least preserved their respect for the three glorious callings which made the greatness of their ancestors. The Count Feraldi,

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doctor of laws without losing rank thereby, married, in 1816, Catherine Marianne, daughter of the Marquis of Grotta Ferrata. At about the same time, two first cousins of his, bearing the same name, married two Princesses—one an Odescalchi, the other a Barberini. Alexander Feraldi was not insensible to the honour of these alliances, which added a lustre to his family name. Three months later, an unexpected legacy, which fell to him just before the birth of his first child, secured him against any possibility of future embarrassment, by raising his income to five-and-twenty or thirty thousand francs. There never was a happier being than Count Feraldi during his first year of married life. This amiable little man, lively and ardent, very dark-complexioned, without, however, a shade of anything sinister or gloomy, acute and witty, frank and open-hearted, filled and animated with his own exuberant spirits the somewhat dilapidated palace of his ancestors. His wife, a rather handsome woman, though of a dry and, so to speak, parsimonious order of beauty, loved him to distraction. Indeed his friends were sometimes wont to laugh at him on account of his excessive happiness. "Where," said they, emphatically, "where will the good fortune of the Feraldis stop? The river Pactolus flows through their garden; the shoots of princely families rejoice to graft themselves upon their genealogical tree. We predict to thee, O thou too fortunate Alexander, that before two months are over, thy wife will give birth to a future Pope!"

On the 1st September 1816, however, the Countess

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presented her husband with a daughter, who was christened Victoria. A year later, Victoria had a brother, who was named Victor—the triumphant little Count not being able to satisfy himself with less proud names for his children. It was really a pleasure to hear him ask, whether his son Victor had sucked vigorously, and whether his daughter had eaten her pap? But as for the Countess and the rest of the household, they just called the little boy Toto, and the little girl Tolla.

The Feraldi palace is situated in one of the finest quarters of Rome, close to the French Ambassador's. It is not very large or very handsome; it has neither the quaint antiquity of the palace of the Doge at Venice, nor the vastness of the Doria palace, nor the majesty of the Farnese; but it has a garden. Tolla was brought up amidst trees and flowers. A long avenue, sheltered from the north wind by a wall of cypress, was her winter walk. When she was only seven or eight months old, she made the acquaintance of an ancient citron-tree in full blossom, which afterwards became her dearest friend. She stretched out her little arms to it, tearing away its long opened flowers and its round lilac-tinted buds in handfuls, and raising them to her lips. The family physician, Dr. Ely, as soon as the earliest days of April set in, allowed her to remain for an hour or two in the garden, stretched out on a carpet, beneath the shade of her citron-tree, or of an evergreen oak, another venerable friend of hers. When summer came, she took her first bath in this garden, in a fountain where the water had

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been well warmed by the sun. Perfect liberty, constant activity, fresh air, and the perfumes the trees and shrubs exhaled, all combined to strengthen her baby frame. Tolla grew, as did the plants around her, without effort and without suffering. A walk in the garden put her to sleep in a few minutes; and on waking, she smiled at life, her parents, and her familiar trees. Even the cutting of the first teeth, that terror of mothers, was imperceptibly accomplished in her case; and one morning the Countess, who nursed her, screamed with joyful surprise, on feeling the pressure of two very sharp little pearls.

Every year, in the month of August, it was the Count's custom to set out for Capri, where he had some fine vineyards. While he was superintending the vintage, his wife went to reside in a pretty villa at Lariccia—a place boasting remarkably pure air, and where no one, in the memory of man, had ever been known to catch a fever. There she was joined by her husband, and there they remained with their children till the cold weather set in, never returning to Rome till they had seen the olives gathered.

The fairest days of Tolla's childhood were spent at Lariccia. She was more free there than at Rome, even although she had been placed under the absolute government of the little Menico, the son of her father's tenant. Menico, which means Dominique, was five years older than Tolla, and six than Toto; but he never abused the authority he possessed in right of his age, and the confi-

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dence of the Countess. Indeed, he could refuse Tolla nothing. In spite of all the exhortations to prudence and abstinence which had been lavished upon him, he himself placed his little pupil on the backs of all the donkeys in the village, and robbed for her sake the most carefully enclosed gardens round. More than once this Mentor had been found laughing with delight at seeing Tolla in the act of devouring a heavy bunch of golden grapes, or of smearing her cheeks with a large purple fig. For twelve years the gardens, the woods, the donkeys, and Menico were Tolla's only preceptors; save, indeed, that from her mother she learnt the rudiments of religion and music. As she was never forced to the piano, she used to like to come to it; her little fingers delighting to run over the ivory keys. It was found that her ear was true, and, what is less common in children, her sense of time accurate. Terziani, the celebrated *maestro*, who chanced one day to hear her, declared that it was a great pity not to give her a regular master; but no one heeded him.

Religion, and especially the gorgeous Catholicism dominant in Rome, found in her a nature ready prepared to receive them. The pomp of the ceremonies, the incense, the gold, the marble, the sacred music—all this had for her an irresistible attraction, akin to that of the flowering citron to which she stretched her baby arms. Her eager imagination seized hold of the first aliment offered it. She conceived a passion of filial love and reverence for the Madonna,—that azure and gold-robed lady whose beauty she saw, and of whose goodness she heard so

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much. The childish enthusiasm that she felt for certain images gradually changed into devotion. By dint of always praying in her mother's room, before a Holy Family of Sassoferrato, she formed a peculiar intimacy with St. Joseph, and sent him many kisses, just as she would have done to an old and respectable relative. "Thou shalt see how I will kiss thee," said she, "if I go to heaven!" This loving nature of hers, as may be well imagined, did not need lessons of charity. At four years old she would actually tear her clothes, because she had observed that when torn they were given to the poor. At breakfast, she would crumble away her bread for the little birds in the garden. "Are they not my neighbours?" she would ask; "I am feeding my winged brothers." Her charity extended to the dead. One day her mother took her to the Jesuit church, where they were preaching for the benefit of the souls in purgatory. This was in the octave of St. Ignatius, about a month before she completed her sixth year. During the service Toto had eyes only for the colossal silver figure, standing on a globe of *lapis lazuli*, and he several times asked his mother whether God himself was as rich as St. Ignatius; and whether He had anywhere in the world as beautiful a statue. But Tolla listened to the preacher. When the first collector passed her she threw into the plate a little coin that her mother had given her for the purpose; but, when they came round the second time, she hastily unfastened her little coral bracelet, and gave it to the souls in purgatory. This was only found out in undressing her at night.

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"Thou shouldst not," said her mother, "have given away thy bracelet without my permission."

The child impetuously replied, "You did not then hear, mamma, how thirsty those poor souls are?"

At the age of thirteen, Tolla knew how to read and write, to climb trees, leap ditches, play on the piano, love her parents, and pray to God. At length her father perceived that, with her small acquirements, her perfect ignorance and her great qualities, she was not very unlike a hawthorn-bush in flower. They resolved accordingly to send her to school. The establishment most in vogue at that time was Marie-Louise's Royal Institution at Lucca. Pupils flocked thither, not only from the other end of Italy, but even from foreign countries. The fame of the annual meetings, and of the prizes there decreed, spread all over the peninsula, from Naples to Venice. The Count Feraldi hoped that the love of glory would awake in his daughter the love of occupation, and that the stimulus of those much-coveted crowns would induce her to make up for lost time. He took her therefore to the superintendent of the Royal Institution, the Countess Trebiliani.

Tolla, thrown without any transition into the midst of the regular and almost conventual habits of a great community, had not time to regret her liberty, her family, or the woods of Lariccia. She was seized with a sudden passion for study, in which curiosity was a more prominent element than emulation. She cared little to appear clever; but she had an incredible thirst for knowledge.

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All the serious faculties of her nature, abruptly roused, entered at once into action, and it was evident that her former idleness had but increased her powers a hundred-fold. Her mind resembled those virgin soils of the New World, which only wait for a handful of seed to reveal at once their inexhaustible fertility. To her, ignorant as she was, everything appeared new—everything excited her curiosity; she disdained nothing, found nothing trivial or trite. The most insipid histories, the most nauseating abridgments, had for her all the attractions of romance. Geography, in particular, seemed to her an engrossing and remarkable science; and, in turning over an Atlas, she felt the emotion of a traveller discovering Americas at each onward step. In short, nothing discouraged her—not even arithmetic, she was charmed with its curt, dry, precise rules; saw at once how ingenious they are in their simplicity, and I hardly think that, since the days of Pythagoras himself, any person has ever been found to take such delight in Pythagoras's table.

At the end of the year 1831, Tolla, without having once thought about covering herself with glory according to her father's intentions, found herself at the head of her class, and received the gold cross amidst the plaudits of all the court. And, without thinking any further of it, she maintained her superiority until she was seventeen years old. In the autumn of 1834, an order of the Duke of Lucca suppressed the institution, and restored the pupils to their homes. Tolla spoke French and English

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gracefully enough: she had acquired all the small stock of knowledge that a boarding-school can afford a girl; an excellent master had cultivated her voice, and changed into a decided talent for music, what before was only an instinct—in short, her parents considered her perfect, and her proud and happy father hastened to introduce her to the world.

She made a triumphant entry into society, and Rome still remembers her first appearance at the house of the Marchioness Trasimeni. All the mothers there assembled, deeply interested as they were in finding out defects, had sharpened their visions by malevolent curiosity. Tolla unconsciously underwent one of those formidable examinations, where all the judges were prejudiced; but she came out of it with honour. The Areopagus of women of forty, decided unceremoniously that she had a rather pretty little French face. The men at once declared her the most beautiful girl in Rome!

Her beauty was of that order which discourages sculptors, and cruelly makes them conscious of the impotence of their art. Her hands, her face, her shoulders, were of the creamy whiteness of marble; yet the most faithful marble could never have represented her. Nothing easier, indeed, than to have given the aristocratic delicacy of the slightly aquiline nose, the proud curve of the eyebrows, the somewhat scornful fulness of the lips, the delicate moulding of the cheeks, where two almost imperceptible dimples at times appeared; but David himself—sculptor of life though he be—could never have expressed

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the animation, the health, and, as it were, the secret joy which lit up her exquisite features. Youth in all its fulness and grace shone through her delicate organization; her very paleness was healthy and robust. She was like one of those alabaster lamps through which the hidden flame casts a softened radiance. Her brown eyes, which seemed black, had the gentle, surprised, and somewhat startled glance of a young fawn who hears the distant echoes of the huntsman's horn. Her long, thick, silky hair coiled round and round her head, and overflowed in two heavy curls that reached her shoulders. Her slight, delicate, supple figure was vigorous too, and resembled those antiques which only inspire high thoughts and noble desires, even though unveiled, save only by their chaste beauty. Her hands were small, and her feet would have been remarked at Seville or at Paris.

Tolla was all the more admired at Rome because hers was not a Roman style of beauty. The vigorous people who bathe in the yellow waters of the Tiber, still retain, whatever may be said to the contrary, a good portion of the heritage of their ancestors. The men have still that grave, virile aspect, that noble bearing, and that dignity of manner, which of old distinguished a Roman alike from Greek or Gaul; and the women are still the fine massive creatures from amongst whom old Cato chose the mistress of his hearth and the mother of his children. The young Roman women, with their low foreheads, their brilliant complexion, their broad shoulders, their plump arms, their thick legs, seem so well adapted to domestic duties that it

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is difficult to think of them save as future mothers and nurses; possessing, as they do, the fertile and abundant aspect of that noble Italy which has, without exhausting her forces, nursed so many strong generations. Their glance, their smile, and even their flirtations, have about them something tranquil, positive, and conventional, which suggests married life and household cares. Amidst this somewhat commonplace crowd, Tolla surprised into admiration by a more racy sweetness, by quicker movements, by a novel and peculiar charm, that baffles description. Her appearance produced upon the spectators an impression analogous to what one might feel if some sudden breeze were to bring the fresh forest fragrance into a boudoir filled with powder *à la maréchale*. From that moment all other smiles seemed insipid, and all those robust beauties amidst whom she glided, leaning on her father's arm, were nothing more than majestic dolls.

She chose for her *début* an extremely simple attire, which was copied on the morrow by all the dark-haired beauties, and which continued to be the rage for two or three months. It was a tarlatane dress over white silk, a white camellia in the bosom, a broad crimson velvet roll in her hair, and a long silver blade placed horizontally through the plait, such as is worn by country girls and by the *minintes* of Transtevère. This rustic head-dress inspired the famous improvisatore Benzio with a sonnet that ended thus:—"Whence comest thou? From the stately court of a king, or the lowly cottage of a shepherd? Art thou called *contessina* or *contadina?* If *contessina*,

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then every shepherd will take arms against the nobles of the land; if *contadina*, all the nobles will be buying leathern gaiters and velvet vests."

Tolla bore without the least awkwardness the little triumph that was decreed her. We all know how difficult it is to receive composedly a shower of compliments. This ordeal, a trying one in all countries, is really formidable in Italy, the land of hyperbole. Tolla had to hear herself compared to all of most perfect that the three kingdoms of nature contain; she was styled at one and the same moment, a star, a prodigy, a divinity. Even the ladies took part in the chorus, fully prepared meantime to declare her vain if she accepted their praises, and foolish if she rejected them. But, in the natural mirthfulness of her character, she found a safeguard against either accusation—she neither received nor refused the flattery with which they hoped to crush her. Sometimes she would playfully bear with it in a manner which seemed to say, "Politeness bids me listen to what politeness bids you speak;" at other times she would return it, especially if offered by women. She paid them back their praises with usury, giving them diamonds for crystals, suns for stars. These innocent and *naïve* sallies won the silent but unanimous applause of all the gentlemen—so difficult is it to resist the charms of youth. In this way the prettiest girl in Rome, without trying to be brilliant, without any witticisms, or any evil-speaking, gained at once her brevet of clever woman.

If Tolla had only had on her side her talent and her

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beauty, she would soon have found a single suitor, but as she had a fortune, forty of them presented themselves. The Count Feraldi lost no opportunity of saying to all who would listen, "There are twenty thousand sequins, or in other words, a hundred thousand francs, in a certain coffer that I wot of, for the worthy youth who shall win the prettiest girl in Rome." However, Tolla danced for two winters with all the young men in the States of the Church, without choosing any one of them. Her parents did not hurry her. "Take thy time," said her father. "I allow that it will not be easy to find a man worthy of thee; and, for my own part, I do not know such a one." The Countess, when asked by her intimate friends, how it was that Tolla, with her beauty, her talents, and her fortune, had reached the age of nineteen unmarried, used to reply without the least annoyance, "We are not of the number of those parents who are impatient to get rid of their daughters." In the world, Tolla was her father's pride; at home, she was the life and the brightness of the family circle. In the intervals between a ball and a ride on horseback with her brother, who had just completed his studies, she would share household cares and domestic details with her mother; she revised the accounts of the *ministre*, that is to say, the steward; or traced for her maid, who was alike her milliner and mantua-maker, the pattern of a collar or a pair of cuffs; she presided over some new arrangement of the flower-beds in her beloved garden, or sang over some beautiful piece of tapestry-work. In short, she was everywhere present, saw all,

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knew all, disposed of all, ruled, smiled at, and pleased everybody. This worldly young lady, this indefatigable dancer, this daring Amazon, who leaped over fences and ditches, fulfilled in the Feraldi palace all the gracious offices of the mother of a family.

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CHAPTER II.

On the 30th of April 1837, the flower of the nobility of Rome was assembled at the house of the Marchioness Trasimeni. The young people were dancing to the pianoforte in the tapestried saloon; a few dowagers were indolently watching their daughters' amusement; the papas were playing whist in the boudoir of the Marchioness; while the garden, which was on a level with the rooms, was peopled by a dozen or so of smokers, who walked in the gathering darkness, lighted only by their cigars. It was the time for the enjoyment of the first charms of spring and the last pleasures of winter.

Madame Assunta Trasimeni had, at that particular period, the most agreeable and the least noisy house in Rome. Strangers never sought an introduction to it; they got horribly bored there, being unable to appreciate the familiar charm and the quiet grace of these parties; but the Romans would have looked upon the cessation of the Marchioness's Thursdays in the light of a public calamity. The lofty saloon, whose ceiling, painted in fresco by a pupil of Giulio Romano's, showed four colossal figures

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somewhat faded, representing Rome, Naples, Florence, and Venice; the beautiful tapestries of the 16th century, whose colours had been softened and harmonized by time; the ebony furniture, with its almost imperceptible cracks; the old lustre of rock-crystal; the Vienna piano, whose sounds were deadened by the hangings,—each and all wore the stamp of a stately and rather mournful hospitality. The servants, all born in the house and dressed in hereditary liveries, presented glasses of lemonade with such cordiality that not one of the guests ever dreamed of regretting the sumptuous entertainment or the vulgar prodigality of such and such a banker, or of Prince So-and-So.

The saloon, the furniture, the gentle and precise domestic customs—all these formed a fitting frame for the person of the Marchioness. She had nearly reached her fortieth year, was tall, rather thin, and had light hair, with magnificent black eyes. Her beauty was made up of dignity, benevolence, and sadness. She invariably wore a black velvet dress, and no one remembered to have seen her differently attired, even in her husband's lifetime and in the days of her youth. Although her mother was known to have left her beautiful diamonds, she was never seen to wear any ornaments, except, indeed, a little gold ring, worn very thin, which was not a wedding ring. This noble and serious lady never laughed, and there was an air of resignation even in her smile. She cared neither for cards, nor conversation, nor music—save, indeed, for certain old airs that she used to play on her piano when

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alone—and as for dancing, she had given it up at the age of nineteen, a year before her marriage. Her position and her husband's wealth had condemned her to mix with the world; but neither in society nor at home had any man paid court to her. An hour's interview had always enabled her to extinguish whatever passions her beauty might have excited. The most audacious love must needs have retreated at the sight of that broken heart, those quenched affections, that spirit filled with mysterious ruins. After God, the only one that she loved was her son Philip, a handsome young man of twenty, who had just entered the noble guard. She hated no one, and the only man whom she studiously avoided was a Colonel Coromila, an old friend of her husband. Her tranquil and monotonous life was all woven of prayers and good works. She spent all the mornings in the Church of the Holy Apostles —her parish church; and in the evenings she went into society, just as a sister of charity goes to the hospitals, to sustain the weak and to comfort the suffering. She excelled in consoling unhappy lovers, and in curing those secret heart-wounds for which the world in general has so little pity.

She took an evident delight in bringing about marriages for young girls, and in smoothing away the obstacles that inequality of fortune will often raise between those who truly love each other. The Marchioness had set apart a large portion of her income with the object of annually portioning off four poor girls; but besides this pious undertaking, it was said that she not unfrequently helped to

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make up the fortune of a noble young lady. Her little parties on Thursdays led to more weddings in one year than the great balls of Prince Torlonia will bring about in ten. And yet they only lasted from eight o'clock to midnight. Her health did not allow her to keep late hours, and it was not accidentally that she had chosen Thursday out of all the days of the week. The guests always retired at a quarter to twelve, for fear of trespassing upon the Friday, a rigid fast-day, on which the theatres are closed throughout the whole of Italy.

There was a general prejudice in Rome in favour of all marriages brought about under the auspices of the Marchioness; and whenever people intended to signify that a match had turned out unhappily, it was customary to say, "They have not been married by La Trasimeni."

Although this sainted woman was an object of veneration to all and of admiration to some, yet public curiosity, whose rights never become obsolete, still occupied itself, after a lapse of twenty years, in inquiring into the secret of her sadness. But no one had been able to discover the sorrow that had shadowed so fair a life. The Countess Feraldi, her friend from childhood, remembered that the beautiful Assunta had two or three times refused the Marquis Trasimeni, without any apparent reason for her repugnance. On the wedding-day there was great difficulty in prevailing upon her to leave off black, and to wear the traditional attire of a bride. She had said to her mother on setting out to church, "I enter into the married state as into a convent." From such vague

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recollections as these, whose authenticity even was strongly contested, a certain number had arrived at the conclusion that the Marchioness still wore mourning for a first love.

At the period when this history begins, Madame Trasimeni was seated in a corner of the great saloon, between the Countess Feraldi and a stranger settled in Rome for some years past—Madame Fratief, the widow of a Russian general. As they chatted together, these three mothers looked on with evident satisfaction at a quadrille in which their children figured. Philip or Pippo Trasimeni was dancing with Tolla opposite Nadine Fratief, who was quite elated with having for partner the lion of the balls in Rome, the king of the young nobility—Lello Coromila, of the princely family of the Coromila-Borghi.

To any one in the secret, the countenances of these four young people would have afforded an interesting study. Lello Coromila appeared to be holding a very animated conversation with his partner, who, on her part, seemed to be laughing and joking with all the careless gaiety of youth, and without any under-current of feeling. Pippo was teasing Tolla to give him a little white rose that she had attached to the body of her dress; and Tolla, who only yielded it in the last figure of the quadrille, was warm in the defence of her property. Neither Madame Feraldi, the general's widow, nor even the kind Marchioness, with all her maternal penetration, guessed at the feelings concealed beneath those gay and indifferent exteriors; but had they been able to read the faces more truly, they would have seen that Lello's eyes absolutely devoured Tolla; that

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Tolla, confused, uneasy, and yet strangely happy, was struggling against a sentiment hitherto unknown; that Philip, their mutual friend, looked at them with the expression of one who wished to see them united; and that Nadine's eyes, in spite of her premature experience in the art of dissimulation, revealed a little love, a great deal of ambition, and one of those concentrated hatreds of which only women are capable.

Manuel or Lello Coromila was the second son of the prince Coromila-Borghi. The Coromilas, if we are to believe their pedigree, date from the Trojan war. The history of their family fills three quarto volumes, published in Parma, by the admirable press of Bodoni, in 1780. The first volume concludes at the Christian era; the second at the year 1000; the third, which is almost entirely authentic, contains the real glories of the race. Ser Tita Coromila, high admiral of the Venetian Republic, and father of the Doge, Bartolomeo Coromila, carried off, towards the end of the fifteenth century, the naval victory of Naxos, which checked the proud progress of the Turkish fleet, and assured to Venice the domination of the Archipelago. Giuseppe Coromila was chief of the embassy sent to compliment the French King, Henry IV., upon his accession to the throne. In the month of May 1797, when the aristocratic government of Venice abdicated in favour of the people, Lodovico Coromila left his country, and came with his family to settle at Rome. The domains of this powerful house are partly situated in Romagna, and partly in the Lombardo-Venetian provinces. Their

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palace of the Corso is the most magnificent of all which challenge admiration in Rome; their villa at Albano has gardens as vast and more varied than those of Versailles, and they still retain at Venice four palaces at the Grand Canal. The three different branches of the family possess collectively an extent of territory estimated at about fifty millions; and the Coromila-Borghi possess rather more than a quarter of this fabulous wealth.

While then the heir of the Doges was advancing in the figure of the Pastourelle, to meet Nadine and Tolla, the ample Russian dowager gloated over the millions that she saw dancing in his person, and repeated for the hundredth time her unvarying panegyric upon the perfections of Lello, whom she obstinately persisted in calling Prince Lello, though she had been told over and over again that he was not, and never would be a prince: the only Prince Coromila-Borghi being his father, after whose death the title would of course pass to the eldest son. Lello would have to resign himself, like his uncle the colonel, to be nothing more than the Chevalier Coromila, but the general's widow did not look at matters so closely; and every time that she committed the old mistake, she alleged in explanation, that in Russia all the sons of a prince are princes too, even were there a dozen of them.

The person of Manuel Coromila, without exactly justifying the maternal enthusiasm of Madame la Générale, was certainly well calculated to please. He was tall, broad-shouldered, and imposing-looking. He had a thoroughly Roman countenance. His large prominent eyes did not lack

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fire; his florid ears, ruddy complexion, sonorous voice,—all evinced a robust organization and excellent health; his dark beard, which had never known the razor, curled gracefully, and his crisp blue-black hair clustered round a throat whiter than any woman's. He had large and rather square hands, but yet so white, so plump and firm, that their very massiveness was prepossessing. In short, taking him altogether, Lello was a very handsome young man of two-and-twenty. As for his mind, the general's widow said nothing about it, mental gifts not coming much into her sphere of thought. But she went into ecstacies over his grace, his elegance, his gaiety, his extravagance, his piety. Lello was the "glass of fashion" for the Roman youth. Till the age of one-and-twenty, he had lived under the severe superintendence of his maternal grandfather; but for the last year, he had taken his fling. He was the originator and arranger of all that was pleasant, the inventor of all the best practical jokes, the king of all balls, and the leader of all *cotillons*. Besides which, he daily heard mass—told his beads every evening in the family circle, received the sacrament at least twice a month, and devoutly kneeled on the passage of the procession of forty hours.

It was very seldom that the general's lady, carried away as she was by her leading thought, refrained from blending with her personal panegyric the praises of the Coromila palace, of the picture-gallery, valued at two millions, of the stables, paved like churches with white marble, of the carriages, the liveries, and the hundred-and-fifty do-

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mestics by which the house was peopled. She had, moreover, a habit of interlarding her disquisitions by a number of "ahs!" pronounced with the guttural aspiration peculiar to northern races. This favourite exclamation sounded from her lips like something between *ah!* and *ach!*

Finally, after she had exhausted that subject, she went on, according to custom, to sound the praises of her daughter, whom she majestically styled, "Mademoiselle ma fille." She took advantage of the never-failing patience of the Marchioness and Madame Feraldi, to repeat a long list of Nadine's perfections and talents, of the sums she had laid out on her education at Paris and Rome, the anxiety that her childhood had occasioned, the fear that had at one time been felt of seeing her become scrofulous, like most young members of the Russian aristocracy, the bitters and tonics that she had taken, and their signal results—in her straitened figure, firmer bone, and independence of medical treatment: how her beauty became day by day more brilliant, how she had had the greatest success in society—of the desirable matches that she had refused (the poorest of them nothing less than a millionnaire) of the triumphs that awaited her at St. Petersburgh, of the kindness of the Emperor Nicholas, who looked upon her as his adopted daughter, and intended to bestow upon her the *chiffre* of the maids of honour: lastly, of the striking first appearance that she would make at the Russian court with a train of crimson velvet, a *kakochnick*, embroidered with gold and pearls, and the cipher in diamonds on the left shoulder.

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Madame Fratief's voice was like another person's scream. With this slight defect she combined a habit of continually repeating herself, and of sometimes inventing, but it was generally agreed that she had a good heart; and then her position as a stranger, the display she made, and the care she had taken to bring up her daughter in the Roman Catholic faith, all concurred to make the highest society tolerant of her. All felt obliged to her for having brought the daughter of a Russian General within the pale of the Church, and despoiled the Greek schism of a soul of some quality. As for the desperate set that she made at Manuel Coromila, no one felt uneasy about that. It was well known that Lello was not to marry yet; and further, that his family intended him to choose a princess. Consequently, Madame Trasimeni allowed the General's widow to finish at her leisure the two pictures which she drew every evening for the pleasure of enclosing them in one frame. When she had come to the *kakochnick*, and the diamond cipher with which she always concluded her oration, the Marchioness, after a little compliment paid to Nadine, said, turning towards Madame Feraldi, "And what of Tolla?"

"Yes, indeed, you are right, what of her?" added Madame Fratief. "They say that you are going to give her in marriage; I shall be delighted at this."

"It is not yet at all settled," replied Madame Feraldi with animation. "You know, my dear," continued she, addressing the Marchioness, "that on one of the first days of last month we received two letters, the one from my

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brother of Ancona, the other from my cousin of Forli, each proposing a husband for Tolla's acceptance. This young man of Forli is twenty-five, an only son, and he will have an income of twenty thousand francs."

"But that is magnificent, dear Countess," interrupted Madame Fratief, "and I do hope that Tolla"—

"Tolla has seen her suitor; he is handsome, tall, fair-haired, and highly accomplished. She refused him at once."

"Without giving any reason?"

"She simply said that she found him antipathetic. The other has not yet come to Rome, nor will he do so unless we give him some hope. We have a very good report of his personal appearance; and he is under thirty. He is richer than our Forli aspirant. We have made all inquiries as to his character, and heard nothing but what is good. He knows what Tolla's fortune is, and he has written my husband word, that it abundantly satisfied him, nay, that he should have been content with the half. 'What I seek,' said he, in concluding his letter, 'is a friend, a loving woman, a good mother—a person, in short, who will know how to forgive my own innumerable faults.'"

"Ah! that is indeed beautiful, admirable, sublime!" cried Madame Fratief; "and this in an age like ours, when young people are actually become more selfish than old ones. The worthy young man! I do indeed hope that Tolla will not refuse him!"

The General's widow's exclamations had reached this

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particular point, when a murmur as low, rapid, rustling, and unmistakable as the wind blowing through withered leaves, spread all through the saloon, the garden, the card-room, the very corner of the house, and buzzed at last round this trio of mothers. A piece of intelligence wholly unforeseen, which fell upon the three like a thunderbolt, reached them, without their being able to discover whence it had come. It was one of those subtle and discreet rumours which seem to diffuse themselves, unaided save by their own energy, and enter at once into every ear, without having been observed to issue from any lips. When this rumour lighted upon the divan of the Marchioness, emotions very different in kind, but equal in degree, agitated the faces of the three mothers who had been conversing. The General's widow blushed like one apoplectic — disappointment, jealousy, baffled avarice, dethroned ambition, the dread of ridicule, the resolve to struggle still, confidence in her own powers, or, at the worst, the hope of revenge—all these hateful passions passed, quick as lightning, over that broad purple face. Madame Feraldi, overtaken by a piece of good fortune for which she was not prepared, remained open-mouthed, stupified as a blind man might be were he suddenly to recover his sight in the presence of a display of fireworks. And the good Marchioness, who had witnessed Tolla's birth, who tenderly called her "my daughter," and who had only consented to receive a Coromila under her roof at Philip's earnest entreaties, repressed as well as she could an ejaculation of sorrowful surprise, and forced back two

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large tears, ready to fall, on hearing murmured round the startling tidings, "Do you know it? Lello loves Tolla!"

The Countess and Madame la Générale were, as it became women of the world, prompt to conceal their respective emotions. The General's widow especially shuffled away her annoyance so quickly that even the eye of an enemy could hardly have discerned it. The conversation went on without any further incident till a quarter to twelve, and turned only upon the wet weather, and the sermons of the Abbé Fortunati, who was making a great sensation at the Church of the Holy Apostles. Tolla was leading the *cotillon*, with Lello for partner. M. Feraldi, while burning with impatience to depart, occupied himself in winning fifty-two counters from his uncle, the Cardinal Pezzato. Everybody dispersed at the usual time, and in thanking the mistress of the house, Madame Fratief, according to the established custom in Russia, assured her that she had never spent a more delicious evening.

When they reached the great staircase, Tolla was going to take her father's arm; but, upon a sign made by him, she went on first with Toto. In the hall she found a bronzed Colossus, who wrapped a heavy cloak round her with maternal care. This was no other than her old Lariccia tutor, the faithful Menico. "It rains a little," said he; "and though we are so near home, Amarella thought it best to send me. But what is the matter, Mademoiselle? Something has happened to you?"

"You think so, my Menico?"

"I am sure of it, Mademoiselle. There are two things

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in the world that I know thoroughly—the sky, and your face. There and here I can tell beforehand when the storm is coming."

"Have I then a stormy face?"

"No; but I could fancy that you were both happy and unhappy at once. Am I right, Mademoiselle?"

"Perhaps so; but why would you have me tell you my secrets, my poor Dominique? They are matters in which you can do nothing."

"Excuse me, Mademoiselle; I can always put an end to any one who tries to vex you. And now let me take off your cloak, for here we are at home."

The Count and the Countess followed their children after a private conference of a minute or two. Toto discreetly retired without alluding to what he had that evening heard. The Count embraced his wife and daughter, and went to his own apartments. Menico went to the stables, where he shared the bed of one of the grooms. Madame Feraldi went up with Tolla to her own little room, seated her on the sofa, threw herself down beside her, embraced her with emotion, and said—

"Tell me all! He loves thee?"

"I think so."

"Since when?"

"Who can say? Perhaps since the beginning of the winter."

"Has he told thee so?"

"Never. The only proof of love that he has given me during the six months, was that of asking me to dance

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in preference to others. All were sufficiently envious of this. The Russian girl moved heaven and earth to compass a *cotillon;* but she never succeeded. As for me, I only looked upon this particular preference as a homage rendered to the sagacity with which I performed the new figures we invented; but the other young ladies were quicker-sighted, and they have long remarked the pleasure he takes in dancing with me; the eagerness with which he looks for me whenever he enters a room, his delight when he sees me, his disappointment when I am not there. And besides, he has spoken" —

"To whom?"

"To his friends. He has never ventured to tell me that he loved me, but he has had the impudence to let the five or six giddy youths who compose his court, find it out. They have told others; and all have taken to teasing me about this love of his; they will have it that I return it, and I cannot dance with any one of them without his saying, 'Lello loves you.'"

"Lello loves you!" repeated Madame Feraldi, throwing her arms around her daughter. "And what have you replied?"

"I? The first time that Pippo Trasimeni amused himself, by saying that I loved and was beloved, I answered sharply, 'What! do you then esteem me so little that you can believe me capable of merely amusing myself with a love-affair?' 'I never said that,' rejoined he. 'Excuse me, you do. The character of M. Coromila is well known; everybody is aware that since his grand-

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father's death he has frequented young people of all sorts, instead of confining himself to such as resemble you, Philip. One hears everywhere that he makes a joke of the most serious thing in the world—love; that he is one of the men whose only occupation in life is that of deceiving women, and that an intimacy with him can lead to no good."

"And what did Philip say in reply?"

"Nothing."

"He admitted, then, that you were right."

"Yes; but the following Thursday I met him at his mother's, and he said, 'Lello is worth more than you think; he speaks of nothing but you, and loves you to distraction.' This is the only time that any one has spoken well to me of Lello."

"And who are they who speak ill of him to you?"

"All the women. For the last four months the girls of my own age do nothing but persecute me with his name. One says, 'At last you are in love, and Lello has wrought this miracle.' Another congratulates me upon having fixed the most inconstant of men. Mademoiselle Fratief had actually the audacity to say to my face one day, 'Now, my dear, tell me honestly whether you mean to make Lello marry you?' So impertinent a question, coming as it did from a girl who is no friend of mine, whom I hardly knew indeed, took me so much by surprise, that for a moment I was speechless; but I soon recovered, and replied that I was incapable of taking an interest in any one who had not the most honourable in-

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tentions. She then said vehemently, 'Do not trust Lello; he has deceived more than one already, and he changes in his affections at least twice a month.' In short, I everywhere heard him denounced as a flirt; and I was at a loss to reconcile the bold manner of which he was accused, with the respect he always showed to me. Never did he permit himself one of the liberties that young men sometimes take at a ball; never did he even press my hand in waltzing. When our eyes met, his turned away even sooner than mine. Sometimes I was frantic on reflecting that he went on proclaiming so much affection for me before others, without having given me the slightest proof of it. Then again, when I thought of the respect he showed me, I was touched by it. And perhaps it is through this that he won my heart."

"You loved him! Why did you not tell me so?"

"I loved him perhaps; but as he had given me no tangible signs of love, I did not dare to own mine even to myself. It seemed to me folly to love without knowing that I was loved in return, from some better source than the idle chat of the giddy youths who flock around him. Just then, you had that slight illness which kept you in the house, and me with you. Three weeks without seeing him! The want that I felt first showed me the extent of my affection. During that long separation, they danced three times at La Trasimeni's, and twice at the French Ambassador's. On those days I remained at my window till the close of the party, that I might have the pleasure of hearing his voice when he came out with

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his friends. I took good care to hide myself behind my curtains; I should have died of shame if he had had the least idea of my weakness. Sometimes I heard him speak of me to his companions. One evening while his friends were roaring out a boisterous kind of song, of which the refrain was—

'L'acqua fa male,
Il vino fa cantare,'

I heard his fine voice humming that song of the fishermen of Santa Lucia—

'Io ti voglio ben assai,
Ma tu non pensi a me!

and as he went away he gave a very heavy sigh, which seemed to come from the bottom of his heart. Perhaps if he had ventured to declare his love, I might have been able to resist it, and treat it with contempt; but this extreme timidity, so rare in a man, quite conquered me."

"But this evening, what did he do? what did he say? He has then, at length, betrayed himself?"

"Good Heavens, no! This evening Philip asked me for the flower that I wore in my bosom, and I gave it him. After the country dance, Lello carried off his friend into the garden; and when they came in again, Philip had no longer the flower in his button-hole. I guessed well enough where it had gone to; but I appeared not to have an idea of it, and asked Philip what he had done with it; he replied, 'Manuel pressed me so much to give it to him, that I was really obliged to make the sacrifice.' I pretended to be annoyed, but I was

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ready to throw my arms round the neck of that kind Philip. Unfortunately they were followed to the garden, they were overheard, people began to talk, and that is the way in which you learned all about it."

"Better late than never," rejoined the Countess, far too happy to frame a reproach. "And now, thou naughty child, listen to me. Thou art in love. If we leave thee to thy own devices, this love will only bring thee sorrow; now I expect something better from it. But promise to follow my advice and that of thy father."

"Yes, mother."

"Should Lello write to thee, thou wilt show us his letters?"

"Yes, my good mother."

"Thou wilt never answer him without consulting us?"

"Never."

"And whenever thou meetest him in society, thou wilt faithfully repeat to me his words, as well as thine?"

"I promise to do so."

"And I promise thee that before a year is over, thou wilt be Lello's wife. Good-night, Madame Coromila!"

The Countess ran off to rejoin her husband, who was far too intensely preoccupied to think of sleep. They spent the whole night in planning a system of tactics that had for their end and aim the happiness of their daughter, and the aggrandizement of the house of Feraldi.

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CHAPTER III.

WHILST Tolla was making her confession to her mother, Madame Fratief was extracting from Nadine a description of the event of the evening, and of Lello's love-affairs. She reproached her daughter bitterly for not having kept her better informed of what was going on. If Nadine, nowever, had not done so, it was because she had but a limited confidence in her mother's good sense; and she agreed with those sportsmen who prefer to go out shooting without any dog at all, rather than with one imperfectly trained.

Madame Fratief, *née* Redzinska, was the widow of General Fratief, one of the Emperor Alexander's aides-de-camp. After the French campaign, Fratief, who was no longer as young as he once was, and who had been perhaps as much aged by the dissipation of Paris as by the fatigues of war, was appointed governor of Warsaw. At the first ball given to him by that town, he saw the celebrated Sophie Redzinska, whose full-blown order of beauty seemed for a season to give him back his youth. He married her without any fortune, and in spite of the re-

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monstrances of the Court, which was scandalized at seeing an illustrious General, a friend of Souvarof's, and a favourite of the Czar, stoop to a Polish fair one. The old soldier, however, had his wits so sharpened by a last love, that he contrived to give a political colouring to his infatuation, and to persuade his master that such a *més-alliance* would tend to rally round him the nobility of Warsaw. After one year of married life, he died, leaving a widow of twenty and a daughter of three months. All the fortune left her by her husband was one year's pay—that is, about forty thousand francs. He, the son of a small tradesman of the third guild, had pushed his fortune, risen through all grades in the army, and successively scaled all the degrees of nobility, without ever thinking of making money. Madame Fratief, who was nicknamed at Warsaw, *La belle et la bête*, had made such good use of her short reign, had been so distant in manner to her countrymen and her old friends, had extended so disdainful a patronage to her family, and governed her good native town in so arrogant a way, that she had made hosts of enemies in a wonderfully short time. All the authorities of the place, as in duty bound, attended the General's funeral; but the widow did not receive four visits. The fair Sophie was proud of this universal hatred, as showing her importance and the power she had possessed.

She triumphantly exiled herself from a town that rejected her, and set out for St. Petersburgh with her daughter, her forty thousand francs, her beauty, her diamonds, her pride, her folly, and her hopes. Arrived

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there, she felt amazed that the Court had not come to meet her post-chaise. She asked an audience of the Emperor, obtained it, and ran to the Winter Palace, ready to pour her griefs, her enmities, and all her secrets in fact, into the paternal heart of Alexander. The Emperor received her in due order, just as the governor of a province went out, and before a foreign *savant* came in, graciously addressed to her a few conventional phrases of condolence, and promised to secure to her and her daughter an honourable maintenance. As soon as this audience was over, Sophie ran to announce to the half dozen she knew that the Emperor had received her like a father, that he had wept in speaking of his faithful Fratief, and that he had used these exact words—"Henceforward, Madame, you form part of my family; I adopt your dear little girl, and shall take care of her future, and of yours. My palace and my heart will always be alike open to you. Knock and you shall be admitted—ask, and you shall not fail to receive."

Eight days later, she received two brevets of fifteen hundred silver rubles—in other words, six thousand francs' pension—one for her, the other for her daughter. This is what the law of the empire allows to all widows, or orphan daughters of general aides-de-camp. Both these pensions ceased, as matter of course, on the wedding-day of either of the parties interested. Sophie thought that she was unjustly treated, because an injustice was not committed in her favour, but she was too vain to complain. She hired an apartment of four thousand francs, on the

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Catherine Canal, and ordered furniture to the amount of twenty thousand; to those who knew the extent of her fortune and the smallness of her pension, and who might therefore marvel at such an outlay, she gave out that she had inexhaustible resources in the Emperor's friendship. During three years, she was to be seen at Court parties, great and small, her husband's name entitling her to admission to them all. Her beauty procured her several declarations of admiration, and one or two offers of marriage, which she refused in expectation of better.

The Grand-Duke Michael paid her great attention for a month or two; but he was soon wearied out, not by her prudery, but her folly. She tried unsuccessfully to play the game of a deep coquette. Her face became the part, indeed, but she had not cleverness to keep it up. Her wiles only compromised herself. Too cold to commit gratuitous faults, too awkward to contrive profitable ones, she was neither able to sell nor to give herself away; and she preserved, without exactly knowing why, a character for virtue that was not much believed in, and for which nobody thanked her. After leading this sort of life for three years, she suddenly disappeared: the fact was, her resources were exhausted. Her furniture and diamonds barely paid her creditors. She herself left for Germany, where she contrived to live by dint of parsimony and gambling, going from one watering-place to another, seeking a husband, swelling the list of her imaginary conquests, and displaying everywhere the remains of her beauty, which faded early. In 1828, she fixed herself at Paris,

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and began to think about the education of Nadine, who was at that time eleven years old. She settled herself in the Rue de l'Université, and furnished, with much difficulty, a very little corner of a very large hotel. In hopes of gaining admittance to the *salons* of the Faubourg St. Germain, it occurred to her to take her daughter to be catechized at St. Thomas Aquinas's Church. There Nadine first received the Communion. Had this been known at St. Petersburgh, mother and daughter would infallibly have lost their pensions. Further, this imprudent action availed them nothing; no one in Paris took any notice of it: the General's widow having, by dint of boasting and evident untruthfulness, acquired the reputation of an adventuress. The education of Nadine was a prodigy of economy ill understood. One with another, all her lessons were paid for at the rate of two francs an hour. A great dark-complexioned girl, the most unpromising of all the pupils of the *Conservatoire*, taught her the art of torturing a piano. They ferreted out for her the most freckled and pinched of all English mistresses—a living image of want, who might have sat for the statue of Ireland. A supernumerary of the prefecture taught her French and French literature, history, geography, arithmetic, physics, and a dash of metaphysics as well. Her dancing-master died last year at the hospital of La Rochefoucauld—the last of his profession to continue the use of the kit. Thanks to the zealous endeavours of these poor creatures—whom Madame Fratief spoke of as the first masters in Paris—Nadine

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completely forgot Russ, German, and Polish, all which she had known in her childhood. She wrote French with tolerable correctness, the participles excepted. She could translate the first chapter of the Vicar of Wakefield, dance all the country-dances, and play one. Between her lessons, she used to give herself a course of instruction, and to acquire a good deal of positive information, in devouring the whole stock of a small circulating library in the Rue de Poitiers. The novel writers most in vogue from 1830 to 1834 were her real preceptors.

Nadine was seventeen, had a pretty face and a straight figure, when her mother, hopeless of introducing her advantageously at Paris, determined to take her into Italy. An old French *émigré*, who had entered the Russian service like the Modènes and the La Ribeaupierres—the Marquis of Certeux, governor of the Imperial residence of Gatchina—sent her a letter of introduction to his sister, Madame la Chanoinesse de Certeux, who presented her to the whole Roman aristocracy. Nadine made a favourable impression: she was tall, plump, fair; asked out everywhere, much danced with; but no one thought of making her an offer. Madame Fratief, who was just the woman to collar all marriageable men, kept watch for three years over her daughter without being able to apprehend any, even the most insignificant millionnaire. To add to her distress, she was obliged to own to herself that Nadine's beauty was not engrained, and that it would soon wear off. This girl of twenty struggled in vain against a continually increasing tendency to grow un-

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wieldy. Her stays were works of art which proved the progress made by mechanism in the nineteenth century. The enamel of her teeth was cracking; and her mother, who dressed her hair with her own hands, had already taken out several silver threads. Madame Fratief, who had rested all her hopes upon her daughter, and who now only looked to escape through her from the thraldom imposed by their small pension, ran into debt to set her off to advantage. Nadine, whose under-clothing would have been sneered at by the most unpretending *bourgeoise*, wore dresses of African velvet and embroidered silks that Palmyre sent her from Paris. This expensive costume was at first worn for the sake of all young Romans who had fifty thousand francs a year, and upwards; but from the day that Manuel Coromila made his appearance in society, after his grandfather's death, neither mother nor daughter could bestow a thought upon any other. He was struck with Nadine and attentive to her for a whole fortnight, and this was quite enough to excite the most serious expectations.

This retrospective review will perhaps serve to explain wherefore, on the 30th of April 1837, Madame Fratief and her daughter regarded Tolla as an unfortunate gambler does the card which is to complete his ruin. They consulted together what means would be the surest to regain the heart that had been stolen from them.

As to Lello, he went back to the Coromila palace, intent upon a good joke which he meant to practise upon one of his friends. It consisted in laying squibs in the

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path of a poor young fellow who was paying his court to a little milliner, and sinning against friendship by keeping it a secret. Rome has all the habits of a small town: the shops are shut early, and the young men are fond of practical jokes. The descendant of the Doges inquired, as soon as he got in, whether a small box of gunpowder had been duly brought for him; he then kissed Tolla's rose, looked at himself in the glass, hummed an air from the *Barbiere*, was undressed by his servant, and went to bed thinking of Tolla, of the little milliner, of a horse he meant to buy, and of the absurd figure that his friend would cut, floundering away amongst squibs. He slept like a top till eight the following morning. The Marchioness spent the night in prayer. As for Tolla, she dreamed that a certain familiar citron-tree put on orange blossoms by way of a change.

The next day, as Lello set about making his squibs, a few grains of gunpowder, that had slipped between the box and the lid, were kindled by friction, and the whole of it exploded in his face. The report spread all over Rome that his eyebrows were burnt, his face blistered, and that, in short, he would be obliged to keep his room for a week or so. Madame Feraldi lost no time in sending to inquire for him, for, thought she, I must re-assure my poor Tolla. The same day Nadine said to her mother, "Good news! *He* has hurt his face. *She* will not see him for a fortnight. And now, good little mother, will you take my advice? Send off François to inquire for him."

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"What are you thinking of, my dear? We hardly knew him, and he has never been to see us."

"Exactly so. When he hears that we have been uneasy about his accident, he will feel that he owes us a call."

Now the courier, steward, valet-de-chambre, and cook of the general's widow, François, nicknamed Cocomero or the *Melon*, was a robust Neapolitan. When he returned from the Coromila palace, he had his right eye surrounded by a violet halo. He had met Menico in the lobby; he had wished to take precedence of him, an antipathy had sprung up, and Menico's fist was somewhat too ready. Each of the two combatants, however, was careful to conceal his prowess. Menico, who was only at Rome for a few days, was afraid of being sent back to take care of his buffaloes; and Cocomero was too vain to allow that he had come off second best. So he attributed the abnormal aspect of his optic to a cold caught from standing in a draught. During the ten days that Manuel kept the house, the Countess and the general's widow both sent Cocomero and Menico every morning to make inquiries; but Cocomero was too prudent to expose himself to a second draught! He was lineally descended from those Neapolitan warriors who replied to their general, "You wish us to go down there—very well, we should ask nothing better, but you see there are cannons in the way!"

The first time that Lello re-appeared in society, he forgot to ask Nadine to dance; but he was more than ever attentive to Tolla. Tolla had taken an interest in his

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health! In the last figure of the *cotillon*, he said to her rather tremulously: "If I thought that your mother were disposed to permit me the favour, I should call to thank her for the interest she evinced about that absurd accident of mine; but," added he, looking earnestly at the young girl, "I am afraid of not being welcome." Tolla felt her colour rise. She stammered out that they should consider his call an honour, that he could not fail to be welcome to all who were fortunate enough to know him; "and besides," said she in conclusion, "all who come to our house do us a favour."

This invitation, which may possibly strike us as exaggerated in its politeness, was nothing more than strictly conventional in Italy. We have but a faint idea of the refinements invented by Italian courtesy. If any one knocks at the door of our room, our brutal reply is, "Come in!" An Italian, without knowing in the least who knocks, answers in one word, amounting to, "Let your lordship do me the favour of entering: *favorisca!*" It is thus that we must interpret Tolla's reply.

Tolla, and indeed the whole family, awaited this visit of Lello's with the utmost impatience. But he did not come. He was in a state of mind that no woman will ever be able to understand, but which will excite the sympathy, and perhaps the compassion of many a young man.

He loved, and, without any very long self-examination, he saw that his heart was fairly caught at last.

He loved a person less rich and somewhat inferior in

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social condition to himself. He might aspire to the hand of a princess, with a fortune of two or three millions. To marry Tolla, would be to renounce the advantages of some great alliance, and to diminish his possible and probable income by a hundred thousand francs at least—a paltry consideration doubtless! but the Italians are a matter-of-fact people. Roman history gives proof of this.

He loved; but unfortunately, he was not sure that his father would give his consent to such a marriage. He was dependent upon his father, an inflexible old man. This old Louis Coromila was blind and paralytic, but from the depths of his arm-chair he managed the whole house, and his sons trembled before him as in the days when the head of a family had power of life and death over his children. Even after his father's decease, Lello would still have, if not exactly to fear, still to conciliate his two uncles, the cardinal and the colonel, for he had no notion of being disinherited in favour of his brother.

If Tolla had been a working-milliner, or a little person of no consequence, Lello would have given himself up without a struggle to his passion for her; but the most imprudent lover might well think twice before he ventured to seduce a girl who had a father of fifty, a brother of nineteen, and a grand-uncle a cardinal. Besides, Lello wished to preserve, in his own eyes, and in those of the world, his character of honourable man. He said to himself: "I wish neither to seduce, to compromise, nor to prevent her marrying; and yet I love her—well then, I will love her at a distance, without telling her so." But

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he could not prevent his eyes from speaking, nor those of Tolla from answering, nor their two hearts from secretly becoming more and more attached to each other. It was all very well to intend to leave Tolla her liberty, in order to preserve his own: each day he perceived that he had obtained more than he desired, and pledged himself more than he intended. He thought that he had won a great conquest over himself, when he had spoken to Tolla in the most passionate strain, without saying to her, "I love you." He made it a point of duty to avoid that formula, while he was lavish of its equivalents. When he returned home, he said to himself, "I have saved two souls." He had only saved three words.

Sometimes, in seeing the simplicity and unreserve of Tolla, whose every look revealed her love, he felt mistrust arise within him. Mistrust is a formidable quality in Italy. I know a Roman sculptor who has walked about for the last five years with a pistol in his pocket, because he distrusted somebody or other. Now there were moments when Lello distrusted his dear Tolla. He was very young, but suspicion wakes earlier in the rich than the poor, doubtless because they have more to lose. This child of two-and-twenty had heard of the little plots that mothers lay in order to marry their daughters, and of the artifices that girls themselves sometimes practise to attain the same end.

He had himself seen how Nadine Fratief and girls of her stamp went about looking for a good match, as openly as Diogenes did for an honest man; and he sometimes

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questioned if the love that Tolla allowed him to guess at, were not a mere vulgar snare intended to catch him. His vanity revolted against the notion of being a dupe; but Tolla's presence, and the open glance of her clear eyes, soon dispelled all his wicked suspicions.

These alternations of mistrust and confidence, of cold calculation and disinterested affection, gave accordingly every appearance of mere flirtation to his conduct.

During a whole month, he met Tolla almost every evening without once alluding to the permission he had asked and obtained to visit Madame Feraldi. The embarrassment that this thought caused him, made him still more cold and reserved. Nadine, who watched his every look, was of opinion that his violent admiration had fallen a few degrees. Society at large began to doubt whether it had not been too hasty in giving credence to the news of Lello's attachment. The Marchioness hoped that her fears might prove groundless. One evening, Pippo said to his friend, "Well, my fine fellow, why so morose; we have had a cold reception at the Feraldi palace, I suppose?"

"I! I have not been there."

"In that case I am wrong. You have not been ill received, but simply not received at all."

"There you are out; I have been more than received. I have been invited, but I have not gone."

"Nonsense! The idea of your refusing such an invitation as that! You will tell me next that a soul in purgatory has refused to enter paradise. Come, be honest, and

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own that you have found the door closed. You are not the only unfortunate, after all. There are but few chosen."

At that moment, the orchestra was playing the first bars of Weber's last waltz. Manuel had only time to say to Philip, "Come to-morrow at two o'clock to the Feraldi Palace, and you will find me there." And off he ran to waltz with Tolla.

The first time that she stopped to rest, he said to her, "I have not yet dared to pay my debt of thanks to your mother."

Tolla would have given anything to be able to still her beating, bounding heart. She felt that her bosom must be heaving in the approved way by which actresses counterfeit violent emotions, and she was ashamed of it. She answered, "I had mentioned to my mother the honour you intended to do us; but when I saw that you did not come, I concluded that you had forgotten all about it."

Manuel replied with animation :—

"I may, then, come? Your mother permits me to do so?"

"And why should she not? She will receive you with the greatest pleasure."

"Then to-morrow, in the course of the day, I might"—

"To-morrow, if you like."

On the morrow, then, Tolla and her mother received the much-desired visit. The greeting was somewhat cold and embarrassed. When one meets for the first time at two o'clock in the day a person that one has never seen

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before but by candle-light, one feels as if making a new acquaintance. Madame Feraldi kept up a little conversation; and they all talked of the cholera which, after ravaging the south of France, had now reached Italy. The appearance of Pippo created a diversion; he told all the news of the town, and related a rather amusing anecdote of Madame Fratief. In her vocation as lady-patroness of a benevolent society, she had gone about collecting cast-off clothes for the poor. Amongst other things, the Princess Prosperi had given her a Cardinal-cape of *glacé* silk. Now, in crossing the Corso, the lady's-maid of the Princess had actually recognised that very cape, disguised by an addition of broad lace, upon the shoulders of Nadine!

Lello was much diverted at the expense of Madame la Générale, and laughed so as to show all his fine teeth. When his eyes met Tolla's, he did not turn them away, and they spoke pretty plainly. Tolla, for her part, allowed it to be seen that she was nothing less than ungrateful. But not a word of love was spoken; and, in spite of all Pippo's efforts to force his friend to speak, Manuel left the house without having declared himself.

He fell into the habit of frequenting the house, and before long he even paid evening visits—the privilege of intimate friends. He was always as it were on the defensive; but love took a stronger and stronger hold upon him, thanks to the emptiness of his mind and the idleness of his life. His habits were those of all the young Romans of high rank. At eight, he rose, remaining in his room,

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occupied in drinking his cup of chocolate, dressing himself, and doing nothing till eleven. At eleven, he heard mass; at twelve, he established himself in his father's study till two. He then dined thoroughly, after which he retired to his own apartment for his siesta, unless, indeed, he preferred installing himself in the tailor's shop, the rendezvous of young men of fashion, and the centre of intellectual activity. At half-past five, he mounted his horse, and galloped as far as the villa Borghese. At seven, he sauntered a little on foot, smoking his cigar, and showed himself at the Circulating Library and at the Café. At eight o'clock, he rejoined his father—told his beads with his family, and read a meditation aloud. At nine, he dressed himself for the evening, paid Tolla a short visit, and made his appearance in society. At eleven, he had supper; and at twelve, he rested from the fatigues of the day and gathered strength for the morrow.

After two months of visits, assiduously paid, Lello was more than ever in love; but he had said nothing about his ulterior intentions. The time was at hand for the Count's annual visit to Capri. But the progress of the cholera, sanitary restrictions, and other difficulties attending the journey, prevented his departure, and it was arranged that the vintage should take place without him,—he and his family moving to Lariccia the day after the Assumption. This decision was finally come to on the 1st of August. Tolla's parents were anxious to ascertain, before they left Rome, what Lello's intentions really were. They began at length to be worn out by

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such a prolonged period of suspense; and the Countess shared all her daughter's tortures. Moreover, Madame Fratief had got her François to dodge Lello, and went about circulating everywhere that Mademoiselle Feraldi was in the habit of receiving clandestine visits. Finally, the Countess's brother wrote word from Ancona, that the young suitor recommended by him was losing patience, and requested a yes or no without further delay.

In Tolla's absence a family council was convened, to which Toto was admitted—Toto being a most prudent and thoughtful young man. It was he who had dissuaded his parents from breaking off in May with the young Ancona aspirant as they had intended doing. And when, after turning over together the best way of forcing Manuel to a decision, M. Feraldi proposed speaking to him, and requesting him to explain himself or discontinue his visits, it was Toto who warmly opposed that project, declaring that it had about it a threatening character which might scare Lello away altogether. The Countess then suggested that she should herself sound him; but her son rejected that expedient as one bordering on intrigue, and likely to rouse distrust.

"No," said he; "it must be Tolla herself that forces him to declare himself."

"She will never consent to do so," said the Count.

"She has too much dignity for such a thing," added the Countess.

"Agreed," said Toto, "that if we were to ask her to enter into a little plot which has her happiness for its end

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and aim, she would refuse to join in it; but let us oblige her to further our plans without knowing what they are; she will be of no use at all if once admitted into the secret."

Thereupon he unfolded his plan, which was adopted without further discussion.

An hour later, Madame Feraldi showed Tolla her uncle's letter. She reminded her that upon her avowal of affection for Lello, her father had consented to suspend the negotiations relative to a most desirable match—that time had been lost, and, what was worse, blame incurred in receiving daily visits from a person by whom she had believed herself loved—that, after two months of this hazardous career, it was still uncertain whether or no Lello thought of asking her hand—that, had such been his intention, he would surely have alluded to it, if not to the Countess, at least to Tolla; and, that as he had done nothing of the kind, it would be sheer folly to refuse a most brilliant offer, without even having the consolation of knowing that she was loved.

"His eyes have told me that sufficiently," interrupted Tolla.

Her mother gently sought to convince her that all the looks in the world are not worth one spoken word; that a mere exchange of glances might go on for an indefinite time; that she would be twenty on the 1st of September; and that, if she lost a year or two in receiving looks of love from Coromila, her character would suffer—it would become difficult to marry her, and she might be unhappy

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all her life long. The sad perspective of this imaginary future overcame the good Countess, who shed very genuine tears. This was quite enough to convince Tolla that her parents were suffering cruelly from the suspense she occasioned them. Accordingly she too wept, and listened with resignation to her mother's ultimatum.

"My child, this state of things must come to an end," said the Countess. "You are free to accept or refuse the match proposed by your uncle; but we really cannot conscientiously prolong the suspense of a worthy man who asks your hand. On the 17th we leave for Lariccia; wait till the post of the 16th goes out before you decide. Reflect, ponder, examine thyself at will—thy future is in thine own hands; for I do not fancy that M. Coromila will come to any determination within the next fortnight.

The last sentence was the Parthian's arrow.

Tolla did all she possibly could to get her lover informed of her position. But when he was so, he did not at all depart from his accustomed reserve. One evening, Madame Feraldi gave them an opportunity of being for some time together alone. Lello only employed it in trying to demonstrate that, if ever he loved, he should be the most constant of men.

"And yet," observed Tolla, "people mention more than one whom you have already forgotten."

"I? I venture to say that I can prove to you in ten minutes, that if I have forgotten such or such a one, it has been entirely the fault of their own inconstancy, and that I have only followed the example they set me."

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"What! your passion of the Piazza del Popolo?"

"It was she who dismissed me."

"And your affair of the Piazza di Venezia?"

"Was I then to remain true to a person who received me every morning, and every evening wrote to another?"

"That may be; but the lady who has just left for Frascati?"

"Yes, to be sure; let us talk a little about her. A most clever actress she was, who could squeeze the hand of her neighbour on the right, while whispering to me on the left, 'I will be true.' And besides, you will do me, I hope, the honour not to give the name of love to mere caprices, the longest of which lasted about a month. When I do love, I feel that it will be for life."

Tolla made no reply. She bent down her head, and seemed painfully pre-occupied.

"What is the matter?" asked Lello.

She answered that she felt sad because her parents wished to obtain her consent in order to fix her marriage with the Count Morandi of Ancona.

"We leave on Wednesday for Lariccia, and I am requested to say yes or no on Tuesday. I cannot bring myself to say yes; and yet I can see that reason forbids me to refuse so desirable a match. I have long been deferring this answer from day to day. My parents are losing patience—my mother weeps, my brother urges me. Every post-day brings me a battle to fight—I have to hear reproaches, to see tears; and, in short, I can bear it no longer, and am in despair."

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She anxiously awaited Lello's answer. He was seated opposite to her. The poor girl's eyes were cast down; she did not dare to look at him who held her very life in his hands.

"What day is this?" said he, in an off-hand tone.

"Friday."

"Well, then, you have only to endure two more post-days. As for me, I would never marry any one who did not possess my heart."

Tolla had just strength enough to reply in a stifled voice, "Nor I either, if I were free to follow my own inclinations."

The entrance of the Countess gave her an opportunity of hiding her tears. Manuel left without appearing to remark her agitation, and walked off with a firm deliberate step. But he had never known such irresolution in the whole course of his previous life.

Tolla was in despair. For the first time for two months, she had serious doubts as to Lello's affection. In her distress, it occurred to her to implore the aid of St. Joseph, for whom her devotion had never cooled. The very next day she began a *triduo*, that is to say, the third part of a nine-days' devotion, entreating her dear old saint to inform her to which husband she was destined by Heaven. "If," thought she, "Lello has not spoken before three days are over, it will be because Heaven has condemned me to accept the other." Her mother allowed her to pass the greater part of these three days at church, with an old aunt for her companion, and God knows whether she prayed fervently.

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Her parents did not interfere, but they themselves had no longer any hope. They fully believed that the end of it all would be the sending of a favourable letter to Ancona. No one could expect Manuel to make up his mind in the course of the next three days, when the fear of losing Tolla, and the sight of her sorrow, had not extracted a single word from him.

"It was a fair dream," said the Count; "but we have awaked from it now. He will marry the Princess that his relatives intend for him."

"If only it does not give Tolla an illness!" said the Countess, with a sigh.

"All is not lost yet," rejoined Toto. "To-morrow is Sunday, and Philip is not on duty;—ask him to spend the evening with us."

Philip, meanwhile learning that Lello went every evening to the Feraldi Palace, fully believed that he was engaged to Tolla. Consequently, his surprise was great when Toto said to him, in presence of the whole assembled family, "Thou, who hast spent last summer at Ancona, must know Morandi. Tell us all about him, for he will probably marry my sister."

Poor Pippo was indeed thunderstruck. He forthwith began to sound the praises of Morandi, whom he knew to be a high-principled man, one of a family of good Italian patriots; but he was so taken aback, that he hardly understood his own words. Tolla, pale and trembling, understood them still less. Lello came in. Philip, more perplexed than ever, rushed out like a madman, ran home,

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got on his horse, and galloped four leagues in order to compose his mind a little.

Manuel guessed from Tolla's emotion that the conversation he had interrupted was not a pleasant one. He did not dare to put any questions, but in about a quarter of an hour, he too left, and ran after Pippo. He looked for him in vain all evening long, returned to the Coromila palace, went to bed, and passed the first sleepless night he ever remembered. On Monday morning at six o'clock, he was knocking at Philip's door.

Now, our good Philip, while galloping along the Ostia road, had guessed pretty much how things stood. Manuel's agitation, and the first questions he put, tended still further to enlighten him. He understood that Lello and Tolla loved each other passionately, but that the timidity of the one, and the irresolution of the other, was about, in all probability, to separate them for ever. Consequently, his plan was soon made up.

"What is it you wish to know?" he asked his friend. "When Tolla is to marry Morandi? Soon, no doubt; for to-morrow she will write him word that she accepts him as her husband, and Morandi is not fool enough to keep waiting the prettiest, cleverest, and best girl in the world. Morandi is a lucky fellow; and, did I not love Tolla as a sister, I would give ten years of my life to be in Morandi's place. As to the poor girl herself, I firmly believe that she would freely give up hers to any one who liked to have it. Do you know that she, for the last month, has been struggling against the whole of her family? But

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the oddest part of the story is, that they have been trusting to me to force from her this unlucky *yes*. It seems that her opposition has arisen from a fancy that she has taken for a gentleman of your acquaintance. Should you chance to meet him, do ask him, in the name of the Countess and in the name of all that is rational as well, to frequent the Feraldis less in future. When a man does not choose to be happy himself, the least he can do is not to mar the happiness of others."

While Pippo was speaking thus to Manuel, Tolla, who had risen before it was light, was fervently praying at the Church of the Holy Apostles. It was the festival of the Madonna, and the last day of the *Triduo*.

On returning from mass, she found her cousin Agatha and her cousin Philomena exceedingly dressed out, who both embraced her at once. These two good Roman ladies were the Heraclitus and the Democritus of their sex. Agatha's loud laugh was like a trumpet-blast. Philomena's attribute, on the contrary, was a tearful sensibility. It seemed that they had been, on the last evening but one, to the amphitheatre of Augustus, where dramas and *vaudevilles* are acted in broad day-light and in the open air. Philomena was still quite overcome by the recollection of a play of seven acts, entitled, "Cosimo, or the Ironmonger *del Piccolo Monte-Rosso*," which was just at that time the rage in Rome. Agatha had found abundant cause for laughter in this doleful drama; and so neither the one nor the other had reason to regret the twelve sous and a half that she had paid for her chair;

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and for two whole days they had been busy relating to the whole town how the one had enjoyed her hearty laugh, and the other her tears. They were just beginning a duet descriptive of their contrary emotions, when Philip entered, evidently much agitated. Tolla sprang from her chair, but Agatha seized hold of her arm.

"Picture to yourself, my dear, that the scene in the first act is laid before a café—but such a café, with green tables and straw chairs!—enough to make one die of laughing. A distinguished Parisian gentleman enters this café of the Piccolo Monte-Rosso to drink a glass of brandy. He enters into conversation with the waiter, and inquires into the news of the district. The waiter was Andréa, you know, that droll Andréa.

"Just then," continued Philomena, "a man enters wrapped in a cloak....

"In the middle of summer, and though all the trees are in full leaf!

"This barbarous man has the ferocity cruelly to place on the ground a little new-born infant, whose piteous cries in vain invoke its unfortunate mother. But at that moment the worthy Cosimo arrives with his dear wife.

"And a melon!...

"To breathe the fresh air of the country, and to eat their dinner on the tender grass."

While Philomena dilated upon the forsaken child found by Cosimo, the Countess and Pippo were conversing on the balcony. Tolla would gladly have sacrificed her two cousins for one transient sight of her mother's coun-

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tenance; but Agatha's large person entirely eclipsed Madame Feraldi.

"In the second act," continued Philomena, "we see a man, or rather a tiger, who drives away from his house an unhappy woman too poor to pay her rent. 'I go,' said she; 'but remember that he who banishes the poor from his house banishes also the benediction of God.' You should have seen how they applauded the poor woman! They called her back twelve times.

"Yes, and she smiled to the audience, and courtesied every time.

"But when the cruel man forbade his servants to let any beggars enter his court, everybody cried out at once, 'Shame! shame!' If people had had stones to throw at him, they would have done so. In the third act, the poor woman comes and falls, pale and dying, at Cosimo's door. A small glass of brandy is brought her.

"There are no less than five glasses of brandy in the play.

"And a handsome young man of twenty politely asks her whether she would not like to rest awhile. As soon as she sees him she screams aloud, having recognised the child taken away from her twenty years before, and exposed on the Monte-Rosso. She embraces him—

"I beg your pardon, she does not embrace him. The Cardinal-vicar does not permit men and women to embrace on the stage. And then—you will laugh indeed now—just fancy, my dear Tolla, that just when the old woman should have called out to the young man, 'Thou

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art my son!" all the bells of the district began to ring at once; and as, the theatre being in the open air, no one could hear a word said—the old woman sat down, the young man did the same, and they chatted and laughed till the bells had done ringing.

"Yes; but how impressive it was when Cosimo came forward at the end of the seventh act, and addressed the audience in these words: 'This may prove to you that there is a God who punishes the guilty, and rewards the innocent!' What applause! what tears! As for me, I am still quite upset by it!"

Tolla's torture did not last more than one whole hour.

When the two cousins left, the one wiping her eyes, the other holding her sides, she rushed to the balcony: Pippo had left without passing through the saloon. Madame Feraldi, seated on the edge of a box of flowers, appeared lost in deep thought.

"Well then, mother!" murmured Tolla in a trembling voice.

"Philip was sent here by him. He asks thy hand."

Tolla staggered and leant against the wall. She was faint and giddy. Her mother supported her, and led her back to the saloon.

"Listen to me," said she. "He wept a good deal when with Pippo; he loves thee, thou wilt one day be his wife; but at present he can only pledge his word to marry thee. His eldest brother has gone and fallen in love with some obscure little Venetian girl in defiance of the prince, the cardinal, and the chevalier. This affair has excited great

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disturbance in the family, and, until it is settled, Lello does not wish to mention his marriage: he even insists upon the pledge he has this day given, remaining a secret for some time to come. For my part, I should be quite content with his promise, which I feel sure he will not break. If you are equally willing to be contented with it, and if you will consent to keep the matter a secret, we can write to Ancona. Your uncle will reply to Morandi that you cannot marry him, that it would cost you too much to leave Rome and to go and live so far away from us."

Tolla was dumb with joy. All that she had made out of her mother's speech was, that she was loved, and would be Lello's wife. The horizon grew brighter around her; the darkest objects put on gorgeous colouring: she was dazzled by her happiness. She clasped her mother in her arms, and smothered her with caresses. At that moment, Menico timidly opened the door: she ran to meet him, and threw her arms round his neck.

Menico had met Madame Fratief's Neapolitan prowling around the palace, and he had entered into a conversation with him, in the course of which he chanced to sprain his right wrist. He was just going to ask Madame Feraldi for a compress of camphorated brandy, when the most fresh, glowing, and exquisite of all kisses, lighted upon the middle of his cheek.

"My dear Menico!" exclaimed she, "my foster-brother! how good, how handsome thou art! I love thee! I am happy!"

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"And so am I, Mademoiselle," roared Menico, in the midst of sobs. "I am very happy—you have kissed me; it is the first time since 1830. I had a sprained wrist, but it is quite well now. My good young lady, you must surely love some one since you embrace me?"

"Yes, I love, I am loved, I am going to be married—soon; not just yet—you understand? It is a secret, do not tell any one, but soon.—Thou shalt be at the wedding, my Menico; we will be married at Lariccia; thy buffaloes shall have a holiday that day. Thou shalt dance with me, I am determined!"

Now Menico knew very well who was to be Tolla's husband. For the last fortnight, he had been sharing all the agonies of his dear young mistress. And yet he had the presence of mind to feign utter ignorance, and did not breathe the name of Coromila. In the excess of his delight, that untaught man never for a moment departed from Italian prudence and reserve; but, while the Countess was attending to his swollen wrist, he mentally resolved to begin a nine-days' devotion in connexion with this marriage, and to guard Lello like a mastiff.

At nine o'clock in the evening Lello arrived. He had a rather long conference with the Count and Countess, from whom he formally asked their daughter's hand. M. Feraldi reminded him that he could not marry without the consent of his family. "I know that," said he, "and even if the law permitted me, I would not do it; but I undertake to procure that consent, and I beg you not to make yourselves uneasy on that head." The Count re-

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turned no answer to this formal assurance, and moreover he knew that old Luigi Coromila was unanimously given up by the doctors, and that before a year was out, Lello would be free. However, to make matters still more secure, and for fear that Tolla's portion should prejudice the family of Lello against the marriage, he, acting upon the advice of his son, doubled the sum that he had previously assigned her, and settled upon her his vineyard at Capri, valued at two hundred thousand francs. When all these arrangements were concluded, they called Tolla, who at last received from Lello's lips the assurance of his love. She put her hand into his, and kissed him on the lips. They were betrothed.

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CHAPTER IV.

MEANWHILE Madame Fratief and her daughter were ignorant of what had taken place at the Feraldi palace. But Nadine, foreseeing that the departure of the family for Lariccia would probably precipitate events, had ordered Cocomero to station himself on the Piazza of the Holy Apostles, thence to keep watch over the enemy's camp. She uttered a scream of rage when she saw her spy brought back on a litter, his face bleeding, and his skull almost fractured. Possibly his condition may throw some light on Dominique's sprain.

Cocomero was a genuine Neapolitan of the quay of Santa Lucia, short, squat, red-faced, greedy, idle, cowardly, stupid, and knavish as Punch himself. His broad flat face, whose breadth was increased by an immense pair of red whiskers, was besmeared with the traces of bad passions; his small grey eyes betrayed at times a porcine ferocity. The whole way from the Piazza of the Holy Apostles to the via Frattina, where his mistresses lived, he kept muttering between his teeth the most terrible curse known at Rome: *Accidente!* which means in plain

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English, "Mayest thou die by accident, without confession, and so be lost for ever!" In a country where people believe in the evil eye as they do in the Holy Trinity, a curse of this nature is equivalent to a thousand boxes in the ear, and the Romans of the Transtevera answer with the knife to the word *accidente;* but Dominique was far away, so Cocomero cursed away at his ease without any respect for the ecclesiastical police of Rome, which has had a little notice posted on all the shop doors, with these words, "Blasphemers, remember that God hears you!"

The general's widow, after a few moderate exclamations, that might be heard a mile off, hastened to attend to her domestic. She had learned a little medicine, to make it appear that she had been born in a chateau, and she always carried about with her a great manuscript volume of recipes, marvellous secrets, family remedies, infallible tinctures, and even magical processes. The most remarkable of the contents of this collection was the following recipe for purifying the blood, "To cut off the four feet of a green lizard during the full moon, and to take a black draught the following morning." Cocomero silently allowed himself to be nursed, and contrived to get down a good dose of a certain domestic vulnerary, whose alcoholic flavour was very agreeable to him, but he obstinately refused to name the author of his misfortunes. "I did it myself," said he; "I stumbled over a stone, and my head struck against a post. I may be clumsy; but I am no coward." He added, darkly, "If any man had

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hurt me as much as I have hurt myself, he would not boast long of it, were he as strong as Nero."

Nero is still the favourite hero of the common people of Rome and Naples.

"Hold your tongue!" said Madame Fratief. "You forget the law."

"The law, Madame! They would not condemn me without witnesses, would they?"

"Certainly not."

"Well then, it is not very easy to find witnesses against a man who has stabbed another. Witnesses are prudent people, who say, 'That fellow has no fear about him. He has killed one man already, which proves that he is capable of killing a second; do not let us quarrel with him.'"

"Yes, but one condemned to die cannot well take vengeance upon his witnesses."

"But," rejoined Cocomero, with a devout grimace, "the Holy Father is a worthy man, and does not will the death of a sinner; he shrinks from shedding Christian blood, and those who have been imprudent enough to kill any one, are let off with the galleys for life."

"The galleys! Is that not worse than death?"

"Beg pardon, Madame. If one has good interest, a good master, for example, or a good mistress, one may hope for a commutation of punishment at the next Easter festival: say, twenty years of irons. That is still very severe, is it not, Madame? But at the end of a year, or of six months—thanks to the same interest,—the twenty

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years will be reduced to ten, the ten to five, the five to three. Now, is not the pleasure of killing an enemy well worth three years of the galleys?"

These were the sentiments with which the worthy Neapolitan went to sleep on the night of the Assumption, while his mistresses were fretting at being unable to find out what was going on, while Lello and Tolla were exchanging their first kiss, and Philip Trasimeni, enchanted with the success of his negotiations, and the happiness of his friends, was running home to tell the whole story to his mother.

The Marchioness little expected to receive such tidings. Three months and a half had now elapsed since public report had informed her of the state of Lello's affections, and she did not believe a Coromila capable of loving so long. Since that first *éclat*, the two lovers, subjected to a formidable amount of close observation, had taken pains to deceive all around them; the Count and Countess, afraid of the ridicule which always attends ambitious failures, had concealed their projects from their best friends; and Pippo, who knew his mother's antipathy to the Coromilas, did not choose to relate the incidents of the campaign till the victory was sure. Moreover, the Marchioness had ceased to go into society, ever since the invasion of the cholera. She had entered into a league against the scourge with Doctor Ely and the Abbé Fortunati. The doctor had been to Paris in 1832, to observe the results of the different plans of treatment there tried; the abbé, from amongst the religious people of his parish,

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and the admirers of his eloquence, constituted twenty voluntary overseers of infirmaries; the Marchioness spent thirty thousand francs, the whole of her savings, in changing a house belonging to her into an hospital. All the cares necessarily connected with it took such hold of her mind, that she had no time to think about anything else, and she had almost forgotten that there were such things as weddings, when her son came to announce to her in triumph, that he had just concluded a marriage between Lello and Tolla.

For a Marquis and a noble-guardsman as he was, Pippo had wonderfully liberal ideas. He prized but slightly the advantages of birth and fortune, under the pretext of having been from earliest childhood rich and noble himself, and he maintained that the only people who care for rank or wealth are those who have bought the one and made the other. But if he despised all social distinctions, he had, on the other hand, a great respect for noble sentiments, and he used sometimes to amuse himself and scandalize his companions by upsetting the orders of Roman aristocracy, bestowing a coronet upon all those who thought and felt as princes, and classing amongst the vulgar, even princes, were they vulgar-minded. Upon Pippo's golden book Tolla's name was inscribed amongst the queens, Lello's amongst the princes; and Dominique, the buffalo-driver, was nothing less than the Chevalier Menico. It may easily be supposed that the inventor of this fine new system was not a warm partisan of fashionable marriages, and that he did not much approve of that

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conventional law which insists upon a prince wedding a princess, and one millionnaire another.

"Come!" cried he to his mother, "Rome is at last coming round to my way of thinking. A great family is about to set the example: the many will follow it. You know that the heir-presumptive of the Prince Coromila-Borghi is at Venice, at the feet of an adorable little girl of no rank at all, whom he swears to marry in the teeth of his ancestors. Well, that is not all, his younger brother, our Lello, that they wanted to marry to a princess, has this very day proposed to Tolla!"

The Marchioness listened with silent sorrow to the detailed narrative of Pippo. Once or twice she was on the point of interrupting a story whose every word woke up painful memories in her breast; but she contained herself to the end. But when her son, having finished, asked for her congratulations, she shook her head sorrowfully.

"Poor Tolla! Why have you staked her happiness against the pride of the Coromilas?"

"The pride of the Coromilas is growing old. The father has not got six months to live; the cardinal is given over by all the doctors: there only remains therefore the chevalier."

The Marchioness rose and went to look out of the window. Philip continued—

"And the chevalier gives me no manner of uneasiness."

"Ah!"

"Not the very least. He belongs to the most in-

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offensive of all orders of men; he is simply an egotist. Can there be anything more amiable than a man who never troubles himself about others? I would not resemble him, indeed—certainly not; egotism is a social virtue which I in no way envy; but though I meet more than one person who is prejudiced against him, yourself amongst the number, I declare that I am incapable of fearing or hating him. I met him this morning; he came out from mass smoking his cigar, and sauntered slowly along the Corso, displaying his portly figure. His great, apathetic eyes wandered from balcony to balcony, from carriage to carriage, as chance would have them; and he seemed to care as little for the glory of the Coromilas, as for the smoke that he was puffing to the winds. If he was thinking seriously about anything at all, it was doubtless about the breakfast he had eaten, or the dinner he was going to eat. He looked like a man of good sense and good appetite, who has no subject of remorse, and takes good care to have none, for fear it should interfere with his sleep. I watched him as he walked with a heavy and self-complacent step to the palace of his fathers, and I exclaimed (to myself of course), 'Long live all egotists!' That fat man will never take the trouble to thwart my little schemes? Now, is not that fair reasoning? Embrace me, and farewell for this evening; I am on duty."

He then affectionately embraced his mother, turned on his heel, and ran to put on his uniform.

The Marchioness questioned for a long time whether or

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not she should go and see Madame Feraldi. She believed that she knew the Coromila family well enough to be able to predict that this marriage would never take place; and that therefore her friendship for Tolla imperatively demanded that she should undeceive her. But, on the other hand, the care that they had taken to keep the matter a secret from her, the fear of appearing jealous, or unkind, and, above all, the thought of the painful story by which she would have to support her opinion—these concurred to make her hesitate till the evening. At last devoted friendship triumphed: "I will tell them the whole," thought she. "Thus my sufferings will not have been barren after all, and the unhappiness of my life will prove the salvation of Tolla."

At ten o'clock she presented herself at the Feraldi palace. Menico, his arm in a sling, informed her that the Countess had not come in. The fact was, Lello was not yet gone. She called again in the morning. That time Madame Feraldi and her daughter were really gone out to hear a thanksgiving mass at La Trinità dei Monti. The Marchioness went to see her invalids, and debated with herself on her way whether she should not write to Madame Feraldi; but she shrunk from trusting to paper a secret that she had only as yet shared with her confessor. She chanced very opportunely, as she thought, to meet the Abbé Fortunati, and she asked his advice. The abbé was an orator and a man of action; but his was a timid and scrupulous soul, little calculated to give advice. He replied, that she had but to act according to her con-

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science, and to trust to the goodness of God. The poor woman, left to herself, could only think of one expedient to free her from this uncertainty. She resolved to return the same evening to the Feraldi palace to speak to the Countess. "If I again find the door shut," she said to herself, "it will be because Heaven does not choose that I should warn them. Who knows, after all, whether Lello may not have love and perseverance enough to overcome all the obstacles that I foresee?"

When she returned home, she found the Countess's card with the word *adieu*, written in pencil. At nine o'clock all the doors of the palace were closed, and not one of the windows looking upon the piazza was lighted. The porter informed her, that on the morrow at daybreak the family was to set out for Lariccia, and that they had just gone to bed. She was returning home when she met the handsome Lello running through the gathering twilight, as if he had wings to his feet. He entered; she waited ten minutes, but he did not come out again. "Come," thought the Marchioness, "it is doubtless God's will."

That evening was for the two lovers the festival of open and allowed love. Lello found the family assembled in the garden, beneath the citron trees, round an old-fashioned table, on which were laid sorbets *à la rose*. The sky was cloudless, and the moon shed her chaste and kindly light on the broad avenues. The cool and refreshing south wind gently stirred the leaves, and filled the whole garden with a sweet and quiet life. All sounds from without were silent, and only the little bell of a

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neighbouring convent interrupted, from hour to hour, the profound silence that broods over Rome. All the domestics, Menico excepted, were sleeping upon a terrace; the birds, rocked by the breeze, were sleeping on the branches; the bas-reliefs that adorned the front of the palace, the statues of the peristyle, and the Hermes of the garden, seemed to close their eyes.

Lello stopped short on the palace steps, and sang, in a pure and sonorous voice, the first couplet of a romance that Philip had written for him—

'The sky is all purple, the ocean at rest,
Sleeping Romans outstretch'd on the earth's warm breast,
At each turn of the street you discover;
And the breeze, as it wanders o'er gardens fair;
Bears, from orange-tree blossoms, the perfume rare,
To the wild beating heart of thy lover.'

Tolla rose precipitately, and ran to throw herself into his arms. She led him to her parents, hovering the while about him like a light shadow, in her dressing-gown of white muslin. In the presence of the Count, of the Countess, and of Toto, Manuel placed on her finger the ring of betrothal. It was a little gold circle, surrounded with turquoises, which he had ordered that very morning in the Via Condotti, from one of the working jewellers there, who are the best in the world. He took Tolla's hand, as if to judge of its effect, and gave it a long, long kiss. Tolla, moved by an innocent, unguarded impulse, which made her mother blush a little, instantly raised the hand to her own lips, as if to take back the kiss Lello had left there. All the evening passed away

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in similar childishnesses, which are perhaps some of the most exquisite pleasures of love. The parents of Tolla, mute, but not indifferent witnesses of this charming spectacle, never once dreamt of exercising any restraint over their daughter; they wished to attach Lello, and they knew that nothing attaches so much as happiness. The two children then ran at perfect liberty along the avenues, or stood still to listen to the silence, or walked slowly, leaning one on the other, and chattering, like two chaffinches, on the same branch, on a fine spring day. They related to each other, more than twenty times, without ever growing weary, the early dawn of their love, and the history of their hearts during the last six months. Then came plans and projects, and Heaven knows how many castles in the air they built and then pulled to pieces, to have the pleasure of rebuilding them.

"We will pass all our winters in Venice," said Lello. "I know no one there; so we shall not be condemned to go into society. We will live to ourselves, hidden in my old palace, which I will have modernized."

"No," replied Tolla, "we must leave it as it is. Are the walls very black?"

"As black and as curiously crumpled as Chantilly lace."

"So much the better; I will not have them touched. Has my room coloured glass like a chapel? Is it hung with embossed and gilded leather? I like it as it is. Have I got a large ebony bed, with twisted pillars and damask curtains, of the time of Véronese? They must

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be left. I will not have the mosaic pavement covered with a carpet."

"And yet we must needs have a carpet for the children. How can they roll about on those hard mosaics?"

"You are right; but I cannot bear a new carpet. We must find out some splendid piece of antiquity: a present from the king of France to our great-great-grandfather the Doge, or a Smyrna carpet, brought home by our ancestor the Admiral. They will thank me for the care that I shall take of their relics, and the old portraits in the gallery will smile as they see me pass."

"And for going out," rejoined Lello, "I will have a great black gondola built, as sad-looking as a hearse, but fitted up inside with white satin, and soft as a swan's nest. Those who see us gliding along the Grand Canal will take us for Austrian officers who are going to drill; they will little guess the happiness concealed beneath those black hangings.

"We must have Menico taught to manage a gondola; I will not have a stranger admitted into the secrets of our love."

"In summer, we will live at our Villa d'Albano. The park is so large that we shall be able to take our morning ride without leaving our own grounds."

"No, your park is public, and our words and looks would be observed by too many people."

"I will close it."

"I forbid you to do so! What would become of the poor people who have got a habit of walking round it like

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princes; and of the little peasant boys who come there to steal your oranges? Besides, I do not see why I should always be living on your property, when you do not once speak of coming to mine. We will spend our summers at Lariccia."

"And where shall we find the closed park?"

"You will only have to build walls around the little wood of forty acres."

"You forget that Lariccia is not ours. Will you allow me to call Toto, and ask whether he will give us Lariccia?"

"Well then, we will not go to Lariccia. I will carry you away to the island of Tiberius and my island too; and, in spite of yourself, you shall inhabit my favourite haunt of Capri. I will lay a wager that you have never even seen Capri, you ignorant man! Ah! that is a beautiful country indeed! I was there once as a little girl, and I remember it as though it were yesterday. When you are in the bay of Naples, you see a beautiful mountain—white, grey, red, all colours in short—standing out of the water. The island appears steep as a wall on every side; and you fancy at first that you must reach it by means of a rope-ladder; but there is a pretty little beach where one lands quite safely, surrounded by fishermen in white trousers and red caps. But to get to *my* vines, and *my* castle, one must mount stairs of about a league in length; but you have good legs, have you not? The house is a square tower, white as snow, with a terraced roof, and such narrow windows that the sun

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dares not intrude. The vine-dressers dwell around it in cottages covered over with red vine-branches and black grapes. We have two great palm-trees before our door, and their slender shadows look blue upon the walls of the house. When I was a child, I took them for giants with their plumes. You will see the mulberry-trees that my grandfather planted, and the great fig-tree under my window, quite full of doves' nests. Do you like Capri wine? Not the red: it is too like wine; but the white, which gives out that sweet scent of violets? They make a good deal of it on *my* land, and *my* wine is the most celebrated in the country. O what a charming life, Lello! and how happy we shall be together on our rock, far away from Rome and the whole world, in the midst of our true-hearted peasants! They will love you: you will bring plenty of money to make them rich; and I shall portion off all the young girls out of my savings. Do you think that, when once there—I with you, you with me, and our children around us—we shall have the courage to exile ourselves to Venice for a whole winter? Venice must be melancholy in the month of November; it rains there in torrents; the fogs of the *lagunes* frighten me: fogs are unknown at our dear Capri."

"I love thee, Tolla! we will remain at Capri all our life."

"Yes, summer and winter, shall we not? Heaven, perhaps, has still fifteen years of beauty in store for me;—I will be beautiful for thee alone."

"Thou art an angel! Rome did not deserve to know

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thee. Why, the whole town ought to be at thy knees. I am furious when I think that there are men blind enough to admire a Bettina Negri or a Nadine Fratief. And those little simpletons who imagined that they could ever steal my heart from thee! They will be well punished when they see us both in the same carriage on the Corso, or galloping side by side along the avenues of the Villa Borghese, or walking together at the French Embassy!"

"And then I shall no longer be obliged to look down when you appear in a room, to be able to watch you unobserved. I shall enter proudly on my Lello's arm, my eyes fixed on his. And how happy my mother will be to go everywhere with us! I shall not dress more expensively than I do now. I will not appear a *parvenue*. And besides, white suits me; and then, I was never fond of jewels."

"Jewels would only conceal a portion of your beauty. You shall never wear any. I must, however, except my mother's diamonds. She left me a most costly, and yet an exquisitely simple necklace. Will you not wear those poor diamonds for the sake of her who is gone?"

"I will do whatever you wish, Lello. You will be my master, and will have a right to put a collar round my neck."

"We will go to all the balls, attend all parties; I shall invite the whole of Rome to witness our happiness. I should like to show you to the whole world. We will travel; we will go to France."

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"When you have learned French, my beloved idler! Meanwhile, I am going to travel alone to-morrow, the road to Lariccia."

"Thanks to that blessed cholera, which may Heaven confound!"

Tolla placed a finger upon his lips—

"Hush! no ill-omened words! Only promise me to watch over yourself, most carefully to avoid all risk, to call in Doctor Ely at the very first symptom, to obey blindly his prescriptions, and, in a word, to guard your life as a thing which now belongs to me."

"Do not fear, Tolla; I am sure not to die of that horrible complaint."

"Sure? And why?"

"Because I shall die of love and vexation the very day you leave."

"No, sir; the day I leave you shall write me a long letter, and you will not have time to die."

"Yes, certainly, I shall write to you by every post; that is to say, every two days. But as to long letters, I am not yet sure about that. Hitherto, I have never been much of a scribe; and I fancy that on the subject of love a kiss says a good deal more than a letter of four pages."

"Love is a great master, and will teach you the art of writing. Only remember that I shall answer you with Jewish accuracy: letter for letter, page for page. But hush! they are calling us. Do look what o'clock it is."

Lello looked at his watch, and replied in utter amaze-

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ment, "Midnight!" He thought that they had been together about half an hour.

"Already!" said Tolla, sorrowfully.

"But do you want to sleep?"

"No. Do you?"

"I! why, it appears to me that we are in broad daylight, that the sky is filled with suns, and that it is a positive sin to go to bed at such an early hour."

"But my father and mother, who are neither twenty-two, like you, nor in love, will want some hours of rest. Good-bye, Lello."

Lello bent over her to kiss her forehead. She ran away from him exclaiming, "No, not here, before my mother."

The Count, the Countess, and Toto, embraced Manuel Coromila as if he had already been one of the family. Tolla put up her face to him, then took his head between her two hands, and kissed him in return. They all went with him to the door of the palace.

"Adieu, brother," said Toto.

"Come and see us at Lariccia," said the Count.

"Take good care of yourself," added the Countess.

"Live, that I may live," murmured Tolla.

At that moment a sob was heard, which seemed to proceed from some brass instrument. Dominique, concealed behind a pillar of *cipollin* marble, was taking part in the emotions of the family.

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CHAPTER V.

The following morning at six o'clock, the happy Lello was sleeping like a top, when Tolla and her parents took their departure in a great old post-chaise, which had, from time immemorial, performed the journey to Lariccia. The Countess and Tolla occupied the back of the carriage, the Count and his son were very comfortable in front; while the servants clustered outside. The cook, the kitchen-maid, and the groom hung on as best they could to the coachman's box; the Count's valet, together with Amarella and Menico, squeezed themselves into the seat behind, and the oblique rays of the morning sun shone full upon all their bronzed faces.

Mademoiselle Amarella was just that everlasting Roman woman, whom all painters bring back in their portfolios; tall, handsome, large, heavily and clumsily made, with a proud and stolid expression, which suited her features rather well than otherwise. Her real name was Maria, but she owed to her acid temper the soubriquet of Amarella. Her parents, poor work-people at Lariccia, had had her taught to sew; but she had raised herself

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by her own efforts to the dignity of lady's maid. Nature, which is sometimes pleased to give to a milliner the qualities of a statesman, had endowed her with a certain kind of ambition, and with a remarkable degree of perseverance. The artifices she had expended to enter the Count's family and to supplant her predecessor, passed all belief. Madame Feraldi used to relate, not without admiration, how Amarella, a short time after she entered her service, was seized with a longing for an old China crape shawl, round which she had hovered for two years and a half, and which at last she got given her without having openly asked for it once. Now this patient young woman had been for the last year pursuing a new project, which she had never yet allowed any one to guess at—she wished to be married, and to that end she had cast her eyes upon the excellent Menico. The young buffalo-driver possessed a manly and robust order of beauty, well calculated to enslave a rustic heart; but the principal attraction in Amarella's eyes, was the candour of this great child, in whom she divined treasures of tenderness, devotedness, and blind obedience. She hoped to find in him the ideal of most women—a husband who would keep the rest of the world in awe, and be himself kept in awe by her. Her plan was all cut out beforehand; Menico should return to Rome in the month of November, and replace the present porter of the Feraldi palace, who could easily be dislodged in some way or other. Their wedding should take place at the same time as that of Mademoiselle's, perhaps in six months, but certainly in a

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year at latest; the Count would of course bestow upon her one portion; and the Signor Lello, in the intoxication of his happiness, would no doubt offer her another. In order not to be separated from her husband, Amarella would remain in the service of the Countess. She now occupied herself in arranging all her future life beforehand, furnished her house, engaged a nursery-maid, and even a small boy to run on errands; and, in short, kept pace with the porter of a prince or the *suisse* of a cardinal.

Meanwhile Menico, his head resting upon the shoulder of the valet, snored in unison with the sound of the wheels. His wife—in expectation—gave him a familiar pinch in order to wake him up.

"*Aô!* Menico, Menicuccio, Cuccio!" she cried, exhausting all the diminutives of his name; "here we are at Tavolato, and the flasks are already on the table."

Tavolato is a small inn on the road to Lariccia, about two leagues from the Porta San Giovanni. Travellers stop there as they do at Ponte-Molle, to empty some bottles of Orvieto wine.

Masters and servants got out under a sort of shed made of oleander branches. The innkeeper brought a brown loaf, a cheese made of mare's milk, and a dozen flasks of white wine, wide-bodied, narrow-necked, corked up in primitive fashion, with a drop of oil and a vine leaf, and filled with weak, light, sweet, clear, and brisk white wine. Tolla amused herself with opening the bottles, and wiping away, with a little wisp of tow, the drop of oil that filled

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their necks, and protected the wine from the air. She then filled all the glasses, her own excepted, and they drank her health in chorus. The twelve flasks were emptied as if by magic, and Menico took his full share, though he only drank with his left hand. He even found time to devour a pound of bread while Tolla crumbled away her share to a brood of little chickens, who, with their mother at their head, came running after the innkeeper.

When they reseated themselves, Menico was in such a good humour, that Amarella believed the moment to be propitious to the carrying out of her little schemes.

"It appears to me," said she, "that you do not dislike Orvieto?"

"The priests do not forbid one to like good wine," answered Dominique, sententiously.

"Did you drink much of it at Lariccia?"

"As much as I wished to drink."

"What do you mean?"

"When Mademoiselle is at Lariccia, she has some given to me every evening."

"And when Mademoiselle is not there?"

"When she is not there I am not thirsty."

Amarella burst out laughing. She had a way of pretending to be highly amused, when she did not exactly know what to say, and wished to show her teeth.

"You are a good youth to be so fond of Mademoiselle; but I do think she returns your affection."

"Has she ever spoken to you about me?"

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"Very often. She says that you would be capable of killing a man for her sake."

"A man! I would kill a cardinal!"

Amarella crossed herself.

"But," continued she, "you must be very dull all winter, when Mademoiselle is at Rome, and you remain with your ugly buffaloes."

"It is dull sometimes, but I always find means to get sent to town once or twice during the winter."

"Do you know that your buffaloes are very ugly, with their mangy skins, their great shaggy heads, and humpbacks!"

"That may be; but when I gallop behind them, lance in hand, over a great bare plain, pressing my horse's flanks hard between my legs, I feel as fine a fellow as a Roman of former days."

"But when you return from Rome, where you have seen so many palaces and churches, how can you bear to look at that great desert, scorched by the sun, without trees, or grass, or houses, where there is nothing to be met with but crumbling aqueducts and old brick ruins? As for me, I think it dreadful."

"Horrible!" added the valet, who piqued himself on being a man of taste.

"That is because you have lived a long time in town," answered Menico, with simplicity; "but as for me, who know nothing, and who have passed my life in the vast solitudes that surround Rome, I like those scorched plains, that ardent sun, those red ruins, I even like the chirp of

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the grasshoppers, whose grey wings sometimes come flapping against my face. When I am sad, I like to see things sad around me."

"And when you are gay?"

"Ah, that's quite another thing. Then I see flowers all over the ground, and the red walls become more beautiful than churches at Easter. Do you understand?"

"Then you have regretted your flowers and your walls during the four months you have just spent at Rome?"

"Not at all."

"How so?"

"I was with Mademoiselle."

"And if Mademoiselle were to summon you to Rome for the rest of your life, would you come?"

"With all my heart."

"Come, my Menico, after all you will die a citizen of the great city."

"That may be."

"And your children will be little Romans."

"What children are you talking of? I shall never marry."

Amarella began to laugh again, but not very heartily this time.

"Never! That is a long day. And why, pray?"

"I have not the time."

"Explain yourself, I beg of you."

"Nothing can be more simple. Were I to marry a woman, I should obey her, should I not?"

"Probably."

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"Well, then! one cannot serve two masters at once."

While Dominique was thus innocently confessing his adoration for his mistress, the carriage rolled along the Appian way; Monte-Cavo drew nearer and nearer, and Tolla, before turning into the road that leads to the villas and parks of Albano, cast a last look upon the burnt up plains that surrounded the city with a girdle of desolation and gloom. If one takes this road in summer time, one is tempted to believe that the soil of Italy, everywhere else so beautiful and fertile, has been branded with a red-hot iron in the neighbourhood of Rome. The road crosses only bare fields, bristling with coarse withered grass, divided off by some palings of roughly cut wood, and animated every now and then by the appearance of a mounted buffalo driver, scouring after twenty or thirty white oxen and black buffaloes. From time to time, one passes a little temple despoiled of its marbles, a ruined tomb, or the remains of some villa of old, where now the hawks make their nests. But to this dead solitude, Tolla lent the life, the youth, and the love that abounded in her own heart. The joy that filled it to the brim, overflowed all surrounding objects, rebuilt the ruins and made green the ground. She now understood, for the first time, the fiction of poets, which avers that love creates flowers at every step.

At two o'clock, the Feraldi family drove through the main street of Lariccia. About the same time, Lello was dressing to go and see Philip Trasimeni; having slept one sleep of nine hours and a half.

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"What brings you so early?" asked Pippo, on seeing him.

"Happiness, my friend! I have passed such an evening as the saints seldom enjoy in Paradise."

"Bravo! And as I am the only one to whom you can prudently impart your felicity, you bring the overflowings of your soul to me. Pour away, my friend, pour away."

"Ay, but this is not all. I want to ask your advice."

"'Ask and you shall receive'—these are gospel words."

"My dear Pippo, she is gone."

"I know that; but if you depend upon me to bring her back again" —

"No, no. I shall go and see her one of these days; I have promised her father. We will meet at Albano. Will you be of the party?"

"With all my heart; to-day, to-morrow, if only I am not on duty."

"No, it must not be so soon as that; I do not wish to be imprudent; but meanwhile, I must — Come now, do not laugh at me; I have promised to write to her."

"Well?"

"By every post."

"What more?"

"To begin from to-day."

"And what of that?"

"If I had received a letter from her, I should not be in any difficulty; I could answer paragraph after para-

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graph; but you know how little accustomed I am to write, and I do wish" —

"What, to take me for a secretary, I suppose?" asked Philip, shrieking with laughter. "Much obliged! I will make you as many verses as you like, both because you will not want them every two days, and because I take it for granted that you are not able to make them yourself; but as every one who has learnt to write is capable of writing prose, I do hope that you will be able to dispense with my assistance."

"Of course, and if you waited for questions before returning answers, you would know all I wanted from you was a simple piece of advice. I am to adopt the familiar style, am I not? I am to speak to her a little about things in general, the state of the public health, balls, all that has happened to me in the course of the day, and" —

"My dear fellow, to cut the matter short, speak to her of herself and thyself. Such has been the invariable text of all love-letters, from the remotest days till now."

"And may I permit myself to call her *thou*? I did so yesterday in the warmth of conversation; but, perhaps, in a letter, *you* might be more suitable."

"My dear Lello, this *you* that you speak about is an invention of the Romans in their decline and fall. It was originally equivalent to the following lengthy compliment, 'Man, thou hast so much virtue, so much power, so much glory, that thou art no longer a single man, but ten or twelve men rolled up in one bundle. Receive my respectful homage.' But all the nations who believe

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that one man is worth another, and that the master does not stand towards his domestic in the relation of ten to the unit, have retained the *thou*. The first Christians used it, the apostles said *thou* in speaking to the Saviour, while an English peer says *you* to his dog, no doubt to show that he respects him as much as a whole pack of hounds. And now you can decide whether or not you mean to say *you* to your mistress."

"No, by Bacchus! Thou art a sensible fellow. Adieu, and many thanks; I am going to write at once."

He ran back to the Coromila palace, double-locked the door of his room for fear of being surprised, and in something less than three hours he had written the following letter:—

"My dear Victoria,—There can be no question about it, it is I who must write first. Well, then, so be it! since this letter will win me one from thy hand.

"I have asked myself whether I ought to use *thou* or *you* in writing to thee; but it seems to me that *thou* suits best two persons who love each other. So here goes for the *thou*.

"This evening is the day of the Countess Sutri's party. One must go there and dance, &c. (&c. does not mean, make love); but the question is, with whom one is to dance? With no one, with ugly partners like La B—— or La M——. If they play at all, I shall play, and by means of a small sacrifice of eight or ten crown pieces, I will insure thy tranquillity and mine, for thou shalt have

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no reproaches to make me. Enough, in my Saturday's letter I will tell thee all.

"They still go on dying merrily here. For the rest, there is nothing new since yesterday. They say that there has been a case of cholera in the environs of Laricia. I wish it were true; the same alarm that sent away thy father would bring him back to us at once. They also speak of two cases at Frascati.

"Apropos of Frascati, I hope thou wilt not frequent that part of the country. At this very time there is there a certain dark little man, who comes from Ancona, and who formerly evinced no slight admiration for thee. His name begins with an *M*, and ends with an *i*. I should not like proximity to give rise to a little affection, which might occasion the writing of some little letters which would —. But, come, I believe that I may trust thee!

"Address thy answer to Manuel Miracolo. I had thought first of Romilaco; but the pseudonym would be too transparent. I do not, however, think that the post-office people will find out Coromila in Miracolo.

"Adieu. It is late, and they are waiting for me in my father's study. I leave thee; thou canst well believe with what regret. My respects to thy father and mother; I embrace Toto. I do not press thee to write to me at once; I am sure that such a recommendation is not needed; and it is in this hope that I subscribe myself for life thy very affectionate and sincere

"LELLO."

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The Feraldis read, in family conclave, this singular letter, where poverty of mind engendered coldness, and awkwardness disguised itself, as best it could, beneath an off-hand style. The reading of it over, Tolla's father shrugged his shoulders and said, smiling, "Lovers' prattle!" Her mother repeated with complacency the last two words, "*Affezionatissimo vero!*" Her brother kept his impressions to himself; he knew beforehand that Lello was no eagle; and he had trembled at the prospect of this correspondence, which might chill the heart of his future brother-in-law by exhausting his faculties. Toto knew that men, at every age, are only great grown up scholars, who seldom forgive those, whether men or women, who have given them *pensums* to do; but however, all things considered, he was not dissatisfied with Lello's first *pensum*.

Tolla, meanwhile, was in ecstasy. She did not criticise her Lello's letter; how, indeed, should she have done so? She was taken up with kissing it, with pressing it to her heart, talking to it, putting it to her ear, as though the sheet could answer her. Everything seemed to her so admirable in this dear little letter; the paper was such a delicate white, the ink such a beautiful blue, the sealing-wax so exquisitely scented, and the style in keeping with it all. If any one is inclined to wonder how a clever, accomplished, fastidious girl could thus deceive herself, and kiss with enthusiasm a very silly and almost impertinent letter, I answer, that it was her first love-letter, and that a first love-letter is always judged indulgently,

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even if addressed to a duchess, and written by a travelling tradesman. Tolla sent him back a letter of twelve pages written without any premeditation, which was less an answer to his than a postscript added to their conversation in the garden. It was a full and circumstantial account of all the feelings that had crossed her mind for two whole days, the succession of her loving thoughts which joined on, one to the other, like the links of a golden chain. The very road had talked to her of Lello; she had heard his name in the noise of the wheels, and, when she reached Lariccia, she had spoken of him to all that surrounded her,—to the house, the garden, the furniture, to her own little room, to the old trees, confidants of her first secrets. The next morning, while waiting for the post, she had ridden off as far as Albano alone, by the little ravine road, just to take a look at the villa Coromila. She had found the gates thrown wide open, as if the house had been expecting its future mistress. The park had never appeared to her so beautiful before; the great oak-trees looked as if, like faithful servants, they had ranged themselves each side the avenue to pay her homage. She had kissed her hand to them as she passed. She had met an old woman picking up dead wood, and had given her enough to keep her warm the whole winter through. Two urchins, who were trying to climb a pear-tree, had run away at her approach; she had gathered some pears to throw at them. At the end of the park, about half a league from the house, she had discovered a charming retreat: it was a thicket of great box

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trees, privets, and laurels—a small study must positively be built there. It was there that she would teach French to her *roi fainéant;* yes, that part of the grounds should be henceforward called the Academy of France.

The letter ended by a whole page of delicious, loving nonsense, wholly untranslatable into a language as precise as ours. It was made up of impossible superlatives—of a quaint medley of adjectives linked together—a chaste and pure freedom of style—a poetic prose, as fresh as the dews of spring, as melodious as the sound of kisses—a hymn to the creature, in which the Creator was not forgotten, the maidenly avowal of a passion without spot, and a happiness without remorse.

Will it be believed? When she had re-read her letter she thought it cold; she wished to be able to write like Lello.

Here is the answer she received :—

"Rome, 19*th August* 1837.

"My dear Tolla,—The post has not yet given out the letters. I am therefore still waiting thy answer to my letter of the 17th; but, by way of gaining time, I begin to write to thee. Should thy letter arrive afterwards, I shall acknowledge it.

"There is an old proverb which says, 'The devil is not so black as he is painted.' I hoped that it would be the same with thy absence, and I thought that I should get accustomed to it; but I see that the proverb has lied, for I am like a fish out of water. I passed thy house yester-

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day, and I felt quite melancholy on seeing the shutters closed. I thought of our walks, talks, &c. And all that is put a stop to! For how long? For a month. In truth, that is really a long time; but there is nothing for it but resignation, the rather that this month of prudence will have good results hereafter.

"I had hoped to go and see thee on Monday; but if thou wilt consent to it, we will put off the expedition till Thursday. In the first place, I shall be more at liberty, and shall be able to remain longer; and then we cannot possibly be too prudent, and I am afraid of rousing suspicion.

"I should like to tell thee a world of things; but it will be better to keep them for our next conversation, which will be a good long one, I promise thee.

"To turn to the Countess Sutri's soirée. I went there about half-past nine o'clock. I took a hand at whist with my uncle the Colonel. I lost a dozen points, at tenpence each, and I left off playing about eleven. I then passed into the saloon, and dropped into the middle of a country-dance. The dancers were La B——, La L——, La D——, and Mademoiselle Fratief. As soon as Madame la Générale saw me, she ran up to me, screaming out, 'Ah, my dear Prince! I must tell you what has just happened to me—a frightful circumstance. The Englishman who lives in our house, on the next story above us, pretends that he has had his gun stolen; summons the police, and has the indelicacy to make them search my servant's apartment. It was in vain that I assured him

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that Cocomero was an honest, worthy man—that all my people were incapable of a bad action. Your Roman police are an unmannerly set. They turned topsy-turvy the bed of the poor fellow, who wept like a child at being unjustly suspected; but they found nothing. I was sure they would not. Do you think that I should do well to complain to the Cardinal-vicar?' So she went on with her jeremiad. I have hardly recovered my hearing yet. At that moment I heard the first bars of a certain waltz well known to thee and me; but as I should have been obliged to waltz with the dear Nadine, I turned a deaf ear. My indifference was fatal to the waltz; the piano stopped, and they left off dancing. Madame Fratief and her daughter left; they depended upon me to accompany them, but I contented myself with making them a profound bow, and saying on their behalf the *prayer for travellers.* Was I right in this, my master?

"And now let us discuss the cholera a little.

"The scourge has completely disappeared from the Borgo; it reigns in the Piazza Montanara and in the Via Margutta, and it begins to work its way on the Corso. I am rather alarmed; but by dint of precautions, I hope to escape. Do not fear; and if by any chance the postman should arrive some day without a letter from me, do not go and fancy that I must needs be dead.

"And here I end the first part of my letter; if I receive thine after dinner, I will add a *post-scriptum.* My respects to thy parents; embrace thy brother for me. I am with tenderness thy very affectionate "LELIO.

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"*P.S.*—I have just received thy letter, and I leave thee to imagine whether I have found it agreeable or not."

This correspondence went on without any notable incident, till the last days of September. Tolla wrote adorable letters herself, and blindly adored the inferior ones of Lello. Toto, as became a cold and judicious observer, secretly noted and laid stress, in the letters of young Coromila, on all such passages as might enlighten him as to the state of his heart or the solidity of his character.

He soon remarked in the style evidences of conscious weariness. On the 22nd of August, Lello, charmed with having been able to write a long letter, exclaimed with enthusiasm—

"Why, here I am at the end of my sheet of paper, I declare! Come then, I will cross. But no! I will take another sheet. In this way I shall write twice as much as usual. Dost thou remember, that on a certain evening I accused myself of not being a great scribe? The fact is, that this has always been one of my defects; but when I write, I do not know how it happens, but I never exhaust myself, and always find something new to say to thee. Who can explain me this enigma?"

The 14th of September, however, this fertility of thought was much diminished. He wrote—

"Dost thou know that it is a terrible effort to improvise a letter throughout without having anything to reply to? The language of love is rich, I own, in conversation, but

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not in correspondence. If thou wert here, I should know what to say; but if I write thee word that I love thee, why I have said so over and over again; that I am true to thee, why, that is too self-evident; that I long for thy return, why, that is such a hackneyed subject, that nothing remains to me but to swear like a heathen because thou dost not return. What is there to say? Good heavens! what is there to say?

"I will tell thee first of all that the cholera"—

The cholera, as has been already seen, occupied a prominent place in this love-correspondence, and Lello's letters might one day serve as helps to a history of the cholera in 1837. Lello, in relating all the phases of the scourge, showed himself an accurate observer; and, in describing the emotions he felt, a psychologist free from vanity. He had all the candour of southern nations, who neither blush at their tears nor their terrors.

"The cholera," wrote he on the 24th of August, "continues to gather in its harvest of Christians; yesterday, however, the reports were rather better, fewer burials and processions of the Holy Communion having been seen than on former days. I own to thee that I am dreadfully frightened, not that I feel ill; on the contrary, I feel as strong as a horse; but to hear it said, 'Such a one was playing at *écarté* yesterday, they are burying him to-day; such a lady was walking out yesterday, she will be in the cemetery this evening;' all this has thrown me into a profound melancholy. The thought of my Tolla supports me, and yet it sometimes adds to my sadness. I say to

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myself: 'Shall I be alive to-morrow to receive her letter? Shall I ever see her again? what will become of her if I die?' And my gloom reaches such a pitch, that I shed tears. Don't let us think about it any longer; come, let us be gay, gay, gay.

"Yes, indeed, gay, gay! that is easily said; but how can one possibly contrive to feel so? A hundred deaths per day, and persons that one knows too. The Princess Massimi, the Princess Chigi, and so many others!"

Such a correspondence as this was little calculated to re-assure the family of the Feraldis. Fear of the disease actually occasioned the poor Countess a slight attack. As soon as Manuel heard of it he wrote to Tolla as follows: "I have learned with much concern that thy mother has been suffering from the prevalent disorder. For the love of God, tell her to take care of herself, and at the first symptom, make her take tamarind tea, and resort to the rice-water practice. This is Doctor Ely's prescription.

"This morning I was frightened to death. I was seized with colic. I thought beyond doubt that I was in for an attack of cholera, and I called out for rice-water; but while they were preparing it, my pains left me, and I threw medicine of all kinds to the deuce."

Such details as these inserted in a love-letter are not deemed unconventional in Italy, and Tolla warmly thanked her dear Lello for the interest he took in the health of the Countess.

Toto, who carefully watched both his sister and Coro-

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mila, perceived that day by day this sweet girl attached herself more to her lover, in consequence of all the alarms he had occasioned her, and the dangers he had run.

Sometimes, by way of variety in the midst of his gloomy presentiments, Lello would speak of his hopes and prospects for the future. At one time he would offer up to Heaven his present vexations, and implore perfect happiness in exchange; at another, he would enumerate one by one the pleasures he counted on the following winter. Toto could have wished him to depend a little more upon himself, instead of leaving matters so entirely to Providence. "Patience," wrote Lello, (Toto would have liked him to be a little less patient,) "let us offer up our tribulations to God, and, in recompense of the sacrifice that He exacts from us now, He will give us by and by perfect felicity. I feast already on the prospect of the days when we shall be happy together, when together we shall thank God for having helped us in our need, and rewarded us for our sufferings. O sweet thought!"

"Very hollow dreams and very vague hopes these!" said to himself the sage Toto Feraldi.

"I am thinking," wrote Lello, "I am thinking of next winter, of the visits that I shall pay thee in thy opera-box, of the select parties when we can see each other without forgetting prudence (too much prudence, thought Toto), of the *cotillons*, the country-dances, the little jealousies which will rise in thy heart or mine, of the wet days which we will spend in thy home, and of numerous other delights which it would take too long to enumerate."

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"He does not speak of marriage!" inwardly murmured Tolla's brother.

One day Tolla wept with joy in reading the following passage from one of Lello's letters—

"Thou mayest fancy, or rather shouldest know, how much a lover attaches himself to everything that comes to him from the one he loves; but yet there is one thing which thou canst never fully imagine, and that is the attachment I have for thy letters. Know thou that I have ordered from Castellani a casket of polished walnut wood, with a magnificent lock, to be opened by a gold key suspended to a gold ring; altogether, it will cost me about twenty sequins, and what do you think it is for? to contain thy letters, which, please God, we shall one day read over together."

Toto made no objection to his sister's tears; but still he would rather not have known the price of the casket.

Ever since the departure of the Feraldis from Rome, Lello had promised to make an excursion to Albano. Tolla, apprized on the previous evening, was to ride over there with her mother, and they were accidentally to meet somewhere near the tombs of the Horatii. But, in spite of Tolla's entreaties, and the eager zeal of Pippo, this excursion remained unaccomplished for six whole weeks. Lello was afraid of giving any room for suspicion. He was watched by three or four different people, and he believed that he had a hundred spies at least at his heels. Madame Fratief and her daughter laid several snares for him, hoping to extort from him an avowal of his corre-

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spondence with the Feraldis; but he carried on matters so cleverly, and knew so well how to affect utter ignorance, *to play the Indian*, as they say at Rome, that they could not obtain any evidence against him. These little plots made him furious. He wrote to Tolla, "That Nadine! I have a great mind to pay court to her, to make her madly in love with me, and then to compromise her to such an extent that she would have to go into a convent! But no; it might make thee jealous; and besides, people would talk of me." His friends, and former companions of his amusements, knew, indeed, that he was attached to some one or other; for he no longer shared in their freaks. But he took good care never to pronounce the name of Tolla before them. One day, his valet gave him, in the presence of seven or eight young men, a letter from Lariccia; and all these madcaps screamed out at once, "Who from? who from?" He coolly put the letter into his pocket, saying, "From an abbé." He repeated to his mistress, with evident satisfaction, these small triumphs of dissimulation: to hide his happiness being one of the pleasures of an Italian. He concealed the real state of things from his family as well, but from different reasons: he was afraid of his uncles and his father.

"I should like to write to thee more at length," said he one day to Tolla; "but I am surrounded by spies. My father sends for me every moment; and, when I go to his room, I do not like to leave my half-written letter on my desk. So I throw it into a drawer, and carry off the key in my pocket. At this moment I have double-

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locked my door: not that a cat even ever comes in; but it is impossible to take too many precautions."

"Poor fellow!" sighed Tolla.

"Coward!" thought Toto.

The last days of September seemed very long to the whole house of Feraldi. Lello was always promising to come, but never came. He alleged, in excuse, two weighty affairs, of which he was waiting the solution. "When you know what has detained me," wrote he to the Countess, "you will not regret the time lost. Our happiness is approaching rapidly, and I shall bring you good news when we meet at Albano." Pippo Trasimeni, on his side, wrote word that he was impatient to come and press Tolla's hand, but that Lello was too dilatory—busy, indeed, just now in founding a sort of charitable association; and convocations, assemblies, collections, and circulars, were taking up the best part of his time. He appeared too, to be engaged in another affair, together with his uncle the Chevalier, and his eldest brother, who was returned from Venice; but not one friend of the family was in the secret, except a Frenchman, Monsignor Rouquette, private secretary of the Cardinal-vicar.

On the 29th of September, at eight o'clock, the assembled Feraldis were reading Lello's correspondence in the Count's room, seated around a little bright fire, into which Toto threw from time to time a handful of twigs. The whole family, Tolla not excepted, was affected by a species of uneasiness not far removed from gloom. The Count read aloud all the ambiguous expressions, the

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equivocal phrases, and the symptoms of indifference, scattered throughout these letters. The Countess and Tolla defended Lello. Toto did not give his opinion: he would have had only too much to say; but he offered to set out at once for Rome, and to go and judge for himself what they had to expect. The Countess refused to let her son run this risk so long as the cholera lasted; but would it not be possible to send over an intelligent and devoted man—Menico, for example? If we learned that Lello had yielded to the influence of his family, his friends, or some new mistress, why, we must look out elsewhere. Tolla might have a choice of husbands. She was only a month past twenty; her beauty was in its perfection; her reputation intact: Lello, in taking care not to compromise himself, had, at all events, avoided compromising her. Morandi of Ancona had come to pass the autumn at Frascati with the old Duchess Pisani. Perhaps he might be disposed to renew negotiations.

Tolla exclaimed against the very idea of such a thing. She vowed to wed Lello or a cloister.

These discussions were interrupted by the arrival of Lello's valet, who brought a long letter with him. Menico, who had just returned from the fields, was charged to take the messenger into the kitchen, and to feast him well. Tolla hastily tore open the envelope, and read aloud the following letter:

"Great news, my dear Tolla, and good news! I begin to believe that God protects us, and that our happiness is sure. *Te Deum laudamus.*

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"Know, first of all, that I—I who in general am so thoughtless—have conceived the idea of founding a great hospital for cholera-orphans. Now, I had to work out this idea without funds, without a building, without anything, in short! I had, therefore, to get over my natural timidity; to become stirring, active, and almost audacious. I spoke to three or four cardinals: they submitted my project to the Holy Father, who approved it most heartily. I then formed a committee, and we organized a system of collections, to be made in all churches, and even in private houses. Thou wilt ask how such a lazy fellow as I am has been able to take so much trouble? Thou wilt no longer wonder, when I tell thee that it was all for thy sake. And how so? It was predicted to me that this good work would bring down the blessing of Heaven upon my sons, (my sons, you hear!) and that, if I could bring this enterprise to a successful close, I should obtain the thing I most ardently desire. I leave thee to imagine whether I undertook it heartily or not! and I have succeeded!"....

"How good he is!" murmured Tolla, wiping her eyes.

"I never said that he was bad-hearted," answered the Count.

"Ay, make amends as well as you can," rejoined the Countess.

"Let us finish the letter at once," said Toto; "surely this is not the great piece of news he promises us?"

Tolla continued—

"I had not long to wait for my reward. Thou know-

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est that my brother went and fancied himself in love with the daughter of a small banker at Venice, who is not even nobly born. He swore that he would marry her; and this freak of his threw my father into perfect despair. He dictated, to my uncle the Colonel, a severe letter, to which my brother made a very impertinent reply; saying that, if not allowed to marry publicly, he could find plenty of priests who would consent to perform the marriage service privately; that he had given his word, and cared more for his personal honour than for the vanity of his family; and, in short, that he was not afraid of threats, since he could not be deprived of his rights as eldest son. I was scandalized, like every one else, at my brother's language; and I could easily guess that, if he persisted in disobliging his family, it would be long before I could hope for the blessed consent to which we aspire. The Cardinal and the Colonel both seemed pleased with the sentiments that I expressed, and redoubled their kindness towards me. Monsignor Rouquette, that friend of the Colonel's, whose talents and light-heartedness are so celebrated in Rome, happened one day to come to see me. It was during the last fortnight of August, a short time after thy departure. He congratulated me upon the proper feeling that I evinced, and told me in confidence that my brother's conduct might do me serious injury. 'Your brother,' he went on to say, 'was always intended to form a distinguished alliance; in fact, we had hopes of seeing him marry the daughter of a very rich English peer. If he

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had fulfilled the expectations entertained by his friends and relations, you, his younger brother, who will not bear the title of prince—you might have married according to your own inclination (which, of course, I am not acquainted with), either into a princely family, or simply into a noble; either to a rich heiress, or to a girl without fortune; but if your eldest brother makes a *més-alliance*, you can well understand that the ambition of the whole family will centre in you; and that the prince, your father, will think twice before he grants you his consent. He will never allow the immense fortune bequeathed him by his ancestors, to be dispersed after his death. Now, observe, that if you and your brother were to go and marry two fortunes of only three or four hundred thousand francs, and your children to follow your examples, the branch of the Coromila-Borghi would, at the third or fourth generation, be reduced to actual poverty.'

"I was struck with the wisdom of the argument, and bitterly deplored this folly of my brother's, which struck so severe a blow at our dearest hopes. I took the worthy Monsignor's hands in mine, and implored him to use all his influence to bring my brother to a better way of thinking.

"'You can help me to do this,' said he, with a smile.

"'And how so, if you please? Is it the place of the younger brother to advise the older?'

"'Yes, when the younger is older in wisdom.'

"'And how do you know that I am wiser than my brother?'

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"'I am sure of it. I know you—you are disinterested enough to marry a girl without a fortune; but you are too much a gentleman, and you have too lofty a soul, to ally yourself with a *bourgeoise*.'

"'I owned, blushing at his praise, that he had judged me rightly.' He went on with much animation to say:—

"'I do not ask you to send a sermon to your brother—you have neither the years nor the appearance of a preacher; but what should prevent you writing to tell him that he is the object of ridicule in all the saloons of Rome—that the young men relate with a laugh how that he is chained to the footstool of a plebeian Omphale—that his constancy and his sighs are made fun of—that people declare that he does not dare to leave Venice, because his mistress has forbidden him—that he is not allowed to leave the town for more than twenty-four hours, and that he would fall thunder-smitten by a glance, if he ventured to set foot on *terra firma!* Add, what indeed is perfectly true, that, of all the worshippers of his mistress, he is the only one to whom she is so cruel. Just arrange all that as you like; you are a clever man, and do not want my advice.'

"So I wrote in his presence a long letter of four pages, tolerably well expressed. I may say this without vanity. My father congratulated me warmly upon it, and my uncle the Colonel said, in embracing me, 'I shall not forget what you have just done; and, whenever you want my support or my purse, depend upon me.'

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"I answered boldly that perhaps I should soon want his support.

"'I guess thy meaning,' said he, smiling. 'Very well; I will not unsay what I have said, depend upon me.'

"Two days after my letter was posted, Monsignor Rouquette set out for Venice. He saw my brother; lent him money, invited him to some parties of his arranging —this worthy Monsignor being a *bon vivant*, in the full meaning of the expression. My brother found his company so pleasant that he consented to accompany him on an excursion to Treviso. This little trip was to have occupied four days; it lasted, however, more than a week. During it my brother received several anonymous letters, not much to his fair one's credit. A sincere friend, whom he had commissioned to inform him of the most minute circumstances from day to day, sent him word that she went a good deal into society, that she was gay and light-hearted indeed; but only, he believed, guilty of incaution and frivolity. Monsignor Rouquette took advantage of a whim of my brother's to carry him off to Padua. The anonymous letters followed him there. My brother, under the inspiration of Monsignor, wrote to his mistress a very dry letter, reproaching her with her conduct. Either she did not reply to it, or the letter got lost. The two travellers pushed on to Ferrara. Monsignor took my brother into a *café*, where he chanced to overhear a conversation that turned upon his mistress, accusing her of treating a certain Austrian colonel with

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excessive kindness. Now, this colonel happened to be my brother's aversion, and he was very near setting out at once to Venice with the intention of challenging him; but Monsignor brought religion to bear upon him, preached to him the forgiveness of injuries, and gently led him on from Ferrara to Bologna, from Bologna to Florence, from Florence to Rome, where our advice, our kindness, the remonstrances of my father, and the raillery of my uncle, completed the good work.

"'And the poor Venetian?' thou wilt say—for I know thy tender heart. Why, the poor Venetian girl marries in a week's time the very Austrian Colonel that my brother had such a horror of! Own that Monsignor Rouquette is an admirable man; he secures by one and the same stroke the happiness of my family, our own, and that of the Austrian colonel.

"My brother has taken a dislike to Italian beauties; he hopes to marry himself in England, and dreams only of red hair and white eye-lashes. My relations are transported with joy, and my uncle the Colonel repeated to me this very morning that he could refuse me nothing.

"I shall go on patiently for another month or two, not to be too abrupt, and also to prepare my father for my suit, and then I shall screw up my courage, and go and say to him, 'My father, if you love me, allow me to marry Tolla!'

"Meanwhile, I have invited Pippo and my friend Monsignor Rouquette to join me in an excursion, which is irrevocably fixed for the 5th of October. We shall be

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on the hill, on the Torlonia road, at three o'clock precisely. If my star allows me to meet there the most beautiful girl of all Rome, there will not be, on the whole earth, a happier man than thy faithful

"LELLO."

After the reading of this letter, Tolla and her mother evinced such perfect satisfaction that neither the Count nor Toto ventured to disturb it by any reflections of theirs. Tolla expected the 5th of October with feverish impatience. She had all that quickness of motion, those whims, those exuberances, those sallies of wit, those bright musical bursts of laughter, which are, so to speak, the sparks struck out by happiness. At last the great day arrived. At ten o'clock in the morning her mother found her at her mirror, dressed in a habit, with linen cuffs and collar, and trying on an enchanting little hat, *Louis XIII.* She sat down to dinner without eating anything, like a child who has had a promise of being taken to the play. She hurried on her mother's toilette, and got out of patience with Toto, who was not ready at two o'clock. At last they set out. When the cloud of dust, surrounding the carriage of Lello, was seen afar off, she feared that the beating of her heart must choke her.

The carriage stopped. Lello gave a little scream of surprise, which really sounded natural enough. He got out, followed by Pippo and by Monsignor Rouquette, in full attire, with violet stockings. Pippo cordially pressed Tolla's hand, and then took possession of the Countess,

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and never left her. Monsignor Rouquette bowed graciously to the whole party, and fell into conversation with the Count, whom he had previously met at the Cardinal-vicar's. Toto joined his mother and Philip Trasimeni, in order that Lello might be left alone with Tolla.

Tolla wondered whether she should be able so to restrain herself as to converse with her lover without throwing her arms about his neck. "How can I ever," thought she, "hear his voice, bear his glances, intoxicate myself with his burning words, without my face, my manner, my whole being, betraying my bliss?"

She underwent an utter revulsion of feeling on seeing before her a polite, formal, starched young man, smiling like a figure in the fashions, and cold as a compliment. He went on talking to her for more than ten minutes without once getting beyond mere drawing-room trivialities. The poor girl could not believe her ears. For a few moments she asked herself whether she could be dreaming. At last she abruptly put an end to insipidities that put her out of all patience; looked full into her lover's eyes, and said, without attempting to disguise her indignation—

"This, then, is what you have to say to me? These are the secrets of your heart which you dared not trust to paper, and were keeping for our first interview! You have made me wait six weeks to tell me all these absurdities! What are you afraid of? what are you waiting for now? When will you ever dare to love me openly? Go! you do not love me! Your heart is colder than

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marble. I can understand now why you would not come before;—you feared the infallible instinct of true love. You knew that at the first word you uttered I should find out your coldness, my own folly, and your unworthiness!"

She bowed to Lello and to his friends, gave her horse his head, and dashed onward into the Torlonia road. Her friends took their leave too, and galloped after her. Manuel Coromila, confused and stunned, got into the carriage again without at all understanding this sudden sally. He had been studying for a whole week the speech in which he was to accost his mistress. He had prepared a little medley of respect, tenderness, and prudence, with which he had not a doubt Tolla would be charmed; but he had calculated without passion.

As soon as she got home again, Tolla ran to her room and wrote to Lello:—

"Forgive me; I have been cruel; I did not know what I said. Thou dost love me, I am sure of it, since I still live; but thy cold and smiling greeting froze me; thy face was like a winter's sun. I should, however, have understood that thou hadst thy reasons for thy conduct. Perhaps, the presence of thy friends? No, not that, since it was thou that broughtest them. Never mind, thou hadst thy own reasons. I do not know them; but they are good, and I approve them. Thou hast thy own way of loving, and I have mine; do not let us ask which is best—only let us love."

Manuel had brought Pippo with him through timidity,

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that he might not, after so long an interval, find himself alone with the Feraldis; and he had brought Monsignor Rouquette through sheer cowardice. His new friend had expressed a wish to form one of the party, and he had not dared to refuse him. The presence of these two witnesses, one of whom had inflicted himself upon him, the other, whom he had inflicted upon himself, condemned him to disguise his love beneath the formulas of mere politeness. Lello possessed that modest shyness, more common among men than women, which cannot admit a third party to share in its loving outpourings.

The disappointment of finding his delicacy so ill appreciated, put him out of temper for the rest of the evening, and he went to bed early. Sanguine temperaments have this peculiarity about them—anger predisposes them to sleep. On the morrow he rose at nine, and wrote at a sitting the following letter:—

"Rome, *October* 6, 1837.

"My dear Tolla,—Thou canst well understand how sweet it was to see thee again, and how painful to leave thee; but thou wilt not perhaps so readily imagine how taken aback I was by our whole interview. Thou wilt wish to know the reason. Well then, I will tell it thee, in the hope that thou wilt profit by my gentle reproaches, and amend in future.

"For about two months we had been longing for this blessed meeting. It had been constantly interfered with and postponed; but at last it was finally arranged. We

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arrive, we see each other, and the moment thy lips open it is to reproach me with indifference! Thou tellest me that I am not capable of loving, that I am ice towards thee, at the very moment that I am suffering, Heaven knows how much! from being condemned to speak to thee thus coldly in the midst of so many eyes that were watching us all the time. I was half mad to see thee as I did, and yet to be unable to tell thee one word of the numberless things that I had on my tongue. Thou doubtest as to whether I love thee or not, and sayest it to my face, while I am positively distracted—while thou art my only thought—while I believe myself as attached to thee as thou art to me, if not more, I have to hear thee say that I care not for thee, and am made of ice! Thou wouldst have me make love like a school-boy, with a great expenditure of sighs and grimaces; that sort of love may do for fools—do not hope to meet with it from me.

"I love, but as a man ought to love—keeping my love in the bottom of my heart, and only allowing it to appear to the one I love. When thou knowest me better, thou wilt see that thy suspicions were unjust, and thou wilt no more inflict on me such painful reproaches. I, too, might have my suspicions if I chose; but I know thy heart, I trust thee, I live in peace; why wilt thou not do the same? Yes, my dear Tolla, if thou lovest me, as I am perfectly sure thou dost, do not accuse me again of coldness; thou wouldst pain me much.

"Blessed liberty, where art thou? Why wast thou not in the midst of us? I should have liked, amongst other

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, to have questioned thee about a certain paragraph
of thy letters, which requires explanation; but
was to be done? at every moment, Monsignor
ette or Pippo, one or other, were turning round to
t us.

hou toldest me, and that weighs upon me still, that
ld not come sooner. Why crush an unfortunate

would not only go to thee if I could, but remain
hee, live with thee, without leaving thee for a single
nt; but how wilt thou have me find time for it
I am obliged to be in the house all day long with
ther? He is blind, Tolla; and thou shouldst see
ecessary my attentions must needs be to him. I
nly got the afternoons to myself. Dispose of them
u pleasest; if thou canst find me out a way of going
ano and returning thence in four hours, I am ready
il myself of it.

esterday, I came in rather late, but the poor papa
othing about it. Do, then, hurry your return to
"

y health has not suffered since yesterday. My
h is out of order, but that will pass off. I should
ery much to grow a little fatter; but I don't know
er I shall manage it.

ince yesterday evening I have, over and over again,
ready to knock my head against the wall, remem-
; that I had this and that to tell thee. But when
et upon the witnesses who were observing us, I am

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convinced that I did well in reserving it all for thy return.

"Thou wilt pardon me this long lecture, for thou wilt perceive that it is my heart which has spoken. Heaven grant that my remonstrances may have the desired effect; and that thou mayest cease to aggravate, by thy reproaches, the grief I feel at being compelled to live far from thee! Never doubt of the love, the tender love, of thy very affectionate and faithful

"LELLO."

This letter, like all the rest, was submitted to the whole family circle. Madame Feraldi was of opinion that it would be well to propose a fresh interview; but Toto thought it would be better to return to Rome. "I hope for nothing," said he, "from interviews which will have Monsignor Rouquette for witness; and as for leaving Manuel in the hands of the clever man who managed to break off his brother's marriage so nicely—why, it is an imprudence which I should be sorry to advise. Did you remark the countenance of that worthy Monsignor?"

"I did not look at him," said Tolla.

"His is a pleasant sort of ugliness," said the Countess.

"Thin lips," said the Count.

"And a wicked eye," added Toto. "Either I am much mistaken, or this worthy man—this intimate friend of old Colonel Coromila—has begun a little campaign against us. We are strong enough to defend ourselves, it

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is true; but only on condition that we transport ourselves without delay to the field of battle. If my advice be taken, we shall set out to-morrow. The cholera is no longer to be dreaded, the autumn is nearly over, we are making fires already. Nothing retains us longer at Lariccia, and everything recalls us to Rome."

"He is right," said the Count.

"What happiness!" said Tolla. "I shall see him to-morrow."

"We will take Menico with us," said the Countess. "I have heard that Tobias, the porter, is in the habit of getting drunk, and beating his wife. Menico shall replace him."

"So much the better," cried Toto. "He is more than a servant—he is an intelligent and devoted friend."

"And so brave!"

"And so strong! The spies of the Coromilas would have no chance with him."

"And so prudent! never a quarrel. He has a pair of arms capable of stunning an ox, and he has never given a blow with his fist in his life."

"Dost thou recollect, Tolla, the day that he had stolen for thee the apricots out of our neighbour Joseph's garden? The gardener was going to beat him; but he quietly pulled up his sleeves, and the gardener prudently contented himself with consigning him to the devil."

These praises of Dominique were interrupted as by a thunder-clap.

In the court-yard of the villa were heard such piercing

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cries that every one started from their seats. At the same moment, Amarella, pale, with her eyes out of her head, and violently overcome, for the first time in her life, came to announce that Menico's horse had just galloped in alone, with the bridle on his neck. Menico was the best horseman of Lariccia, and no one could believe that his horse had thrown him. Could he have been the victim of an assassination? No one knew of a single enemy that he had. Toto ran out, followed by all the men of the household, and by Amarella. They had not proceeded twenty steps through the village when they met a group of peasants bringing back Dominique's body on a litter. A ball had passed through his head from temple to temple.

The barber came running in after a few minutes. He was a jovial little man this barber. He declared that there was nothing to be done for the wounded man, but to make him a good deal coffin; he had had his brain traversed by the ball, and would be cold in an hour. "Poor Menico!" added he, with a sprightly air; "I should like to be able to cure thee, but what can be done? I am not almighty."

The body was placed in one of the rooms on the ground floor. Toto and Tolla refused to leave it, and insisted upon spending the whole night in prayer, in company with the parish priest. Amarella disappeared after the conversation with the barber.

The brother and sister prayed ardently for Dominique's life; or at all events, since all hope of that was over, for the

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salvation of his soul. The idea of his having to appear in the presence of his Judge, without having had an interval of consciousness, made the pious Tolla tremble. "If at least," said she, "God would permit him to receive the aids of religion, and to detect his faults."

"His pulse still beats," said Toto; "but so feebly, that one hardly feels it. Poor Menico! he was our oldest friend."

"We have lost the good genius of the house;—henceforth I expect every calamity. Lello loves me no longer!"

At four o'clock in the morning the sufferer had not regained consciousness; but his pulse still beat. Tolla, pale and with hair dishevelled, looked, as she knelt beside the pallet, like one of those statues of prayer that sculptors are apt to prostrate round the tombs of kings. Her brother was dozing; she herself had fallen into a kind of lethargy. She never heard the sound of a carriage stopping at the door, and suddenly started to her feet, believing that she was still dreaming, when she saw Amarella enter, followed by Doctor Ely. Amarella had ridden the six leagues in three hours, mounted upon Menico's horse.

The Count and Countess came in a few minutes afterwards. The doctor, in their presence, proceeded to examine the entrance and exit of the ball, both which were situated at from two to six centimetres above the external commissure of the eyes; but the ball, instead of traversing the brain, had followed the direction of the

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bone, passing under the membrane of the skull; and the case of the wounded man, though serious enough, was by no means desperate. When the dressing was over, and the bandages properly arranged, Menico came to himself. His first look was at Tolla; his second at the priest.

"Shall I have time to confess?" asked he, in a scarcely audible voice.

"Yes, my good fellow," replied the doctor; "and I even hope that you will have time to live."

All those present retired into an adjoining room. After a quarter of an hour they were summoned back. The priest went for the holy viaticum, to be prepared for every contingency. The sufferer appeared to be in the enjoyment of all his intellectual faculties, only he was weak and languid.

The doctor stopped short with the Count on the threshold of the room, and they exchanged the following words, in a low voice:—

"Do you know," asked the doctor, "how this has come about?"

"No, dear doctor; he was found on the Albano road."

"Had he enemies?"

"We are not aware of any."

"Are his father or his brother at enmity with any one?"

"He is an only son, and his father has been dead the last ten years."

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"If he knows his assassin, do you think he will be willing to name him?"

"I doubt it. You know how little respect they, any of them, have for justice."

"Yes, they like better to revenge themselves than to complain; and they would believe it cowardly to invoke the aid of the law."

"However, I am going to try to get him to speak. Such a crime ought not to remain unpunished."

"You can try. He is very weak; he will not have the strength to lie."

"Besides, he has just received absolution; he will not dare to commit a sin."

Not a word of this conversation was heard by any of those who surrounded Menico; but it often happens that the sick have their sense of hearing prodigiously increased, and Menico's eyes flashed with a strange brilliancy at the expression made use of by the doctor, "They like better to revenge themselves than to complain."

"Doctor," observed the Count, as he drew near, "it is not we who shall have to interrogate him. My daughter's maid has not waited for us to begin that process."

Amarella was just then saying to Menico, "So, my poor fellow, you have got enemies then?"

"You see yourself that I have not, since every one is weeping around me."

"If I only knew the wretch who fired at thee!"

"No one fired at me. I fell upon a sharp stone."

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"But how could you have fallen upon both temples at once?"

"That is not more difficult than to sleep upon both ears."

"But, unhappy man, you had a ball inside you."

"Had I a ball inside me?"

"Yes, you had a ball inside you."

He answered, with a quiet laugh, "I must have drunk after some dirty person or other."

"We shall know nothing," said the Count.

"His brain is as sound as yours or mine," added the doctor. "I can now answer for his life."

Amarella uttered a scream of joy.

"What is it to you?" asked Menico, innocently. Mademoiselle Tolla, I am glad not to die before your marriage. Monsieur le Comte, I have a favour to ask of you. When I am cured, will you permit me to go and serve you at Rome?"

"That has been a settled thing since yesterday," said Tolla.

"Certainly," added her father, "I will not leave thee here, exposed to the shots of the villain who tried to assassinate thee."

"Thank you, sir. You have perfectly understood me."

"Doctor," asked Toto, "could you not lend me one of your pupils, who might conclude what you have so happily begun?"

"That is my full intention."

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"I shall remain with your young assistant, and with my good Dominique, till he is perfectly cured. My father, mother, and sister will set out with you this morning for Rome."

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CHAPTER VI.

For the first time in her life, Tolla left the country without regret. She complained of the slow pace of the horses: she yearned to reach Rome. As soon as she perceived the distant dome of St. Peter's, she clapped her hands with an expression of infantine delight, which made the doctor smile.

And yet, if she had been able to analyze her own sentiments, and to take account of the real state of her heart, she would have discovered that her happiness was more qualified, and her joy less tranquil, than when she set out for Lariccia. In the month of August, the only possible fear she had was for Lello's life; and that was tempered by an implicit trust in the mercy of Heaven: nay, she would have believed it a calumny against Providence, to suppose that the scourge could possibly reach her lover. But that unfortunate interview, the embarrassed manner of Lello, Monsignor Rouquette's presence, the last letter that she had received, the observations that that remarkable composition had elicited from the Count and Toto, and, finally, the mysterious blow which had just fallen

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upon the most humble and devoted of her friends; all these accumulated circumstances diffused in her soul a secret uneasiness which she vainly endeavoured to banish. She foresaw that what she had to fear was not one of those sudden calamities which come directly from the hand of God, but rather one of those insidious strokes which human ambition or hatred direct. For the rest, the perspective that opened out before her, of snares to escape, opposition to overcome, obstacles to surmount, in a word, of a war to carry on, in no way affrighted her. From her childhood, she had learned to leap over many a barrier, and neither to fear fatigue nor danger. This manly education had strengthened her mind. "We shall soon see," thought she, "if a faithful and honourable affection may not be able, with God's help, to triumph over intrigue and hate."

As they re-entered Rome, the Countess recognised Monsignor Rouquette, who alighted from his carriage at the museum of St. John Lateran. She pointed him out to Doctor Ely.

"Monsignor Rouquette!" said the doctor.

"Do you know him?"

"He is one of my patients; but, as his health is better than mine, we do not often meet."

"What do people generally say of him?"

"They say that he is a well-bred man, and a clever man, who may, if it pleases God, become a holy man by and by."

"Is that all they say?"

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"All," replied the prudent doctor.

"Then, my dear doctor, tell us what people think of him; for, of all towns in the world, Rome is the one where what people say, least resembles what they think."

"They think that Monsignor Rouquette is neither young nor old, handsome nor ugly, dark nor light, tall nor short, rich nor poor, priest nor layman, neither an honest man nor a rogue, neither....But why will you oblige me to compromise myself?"

"Speak out, my kind friend," said Tolla, impetuously. "This man, whom I only saw three days ago, has come across me and my happiness, either to serve or to destroy me. Do inform me, if you can, what I have to hope or to fear."

"Everything, my dear little angel, according as he may be for or against you. You know that I have a bad habit of judging people by their physiognomies: now, the monsignor in question has one of the most significant countenances it has ever fallen to my lot to observe. His head is a real study. The forehead is high and broad, the cranium vast, the brain well developed, the eyes small, round, and deeply set, the iris of a light transparent blue, like those of a wild beast; the nostrils open, flexible, and in constant action—an infallible sign of strong passions and insatiable appetites; the lips thin, if, indeed, he have lips at all; teeth that could bite off anything; a short chin, thick-set and deeply cut by a dimple; a wrinkled forehead, scorbutic cheek-bones, and large crows' feet at the corner of his temples. Just guess what

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I always think of in seeing that face, disturbed, tormented, and cracked as it is, by the action of an internal fire? Of the Solfatara of Naples. I seem to smell a half-extinguished volcano; and I fancy, God forgive me! that I see the smoke coming out of the wrinkles on his brow."

"Bravo, Doctor!" interposed the Count. "Why, to hear you talk, one would think that his Eminence the Cardinal-vicar had a private secretary directly descended from the infernal regions."

"I do not know whether he comes from there, but, I will answer for it, he is going there. M. Rouquette is a man vigorous in mind and body, who, unfortunately for himself and others, was born in a village stable or a Paris garret, with all the instincts of a prince. The world has never lacked these men of action, whom destiny throws on the *pavé* without money, without birth, without, in short, any other instruments at command than their own intelligence and strength of will. According to circumstances, these men become illustrious or infamous, they do much good or much harm; but they never die without doing a something. Whether they strip the passers-by like Cartouche, or rifle nations like Law, or overturn thrones like Marat, or found dynasties themselves, there is a close relationship between them all; they all belong to the one great family of adventurers. Now, Rouquette is a younger son of this family. At the period of the civil wars of the middle ages, he would have headed a troop of free lances; during the troubles in the time of

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Louis XIV., he would have taken out letters of mark, and commanded a pirate's vessel; in the following century, he would have invented a Mississippi scheme, or held the cards in some gambling-house; under the French Republic, he would have been the orator of his crossway, and the president of his section. In 1837, discouraged by the fact of living in a country where peace, law, the army, and the police, have for ever put an end to the golden age of adventurers, he is come to Rome: he aspires to ecclesiastical dignities, the only ones accessible to a clever man without birth or fortune. He chooses out of the sacred college the two men who have the best chance of the papacy. He becomes the secretary of the Cardinal-vicar, and insinuates himself into the confidence of the Cardinal Coromila. Without renouncing the pleasures of a lay career—for he is not even tonsured—he wears the ecclesiastical dress, obtains the title of monsignor, and the right of putting on purple stockings: ready alike to enter into holy orders for the sake of the first bishopric which falls vacant, or to throw the cassock to the winds, should he find himself able to marry a fortune. Clever enough for anything, capable of everything, obeying events till he has the power of commanding them, commanding his passions till he be rich enough to obey them, he has already gained credit sufficient to find nothing impossible to him, not even good. Should some proximate or remote interest lead him to secure your happiness, depend upon him, you will be happy; but were he to take it into his head to lay a wager that I should

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die within the year, my word! I should begin at once to make my will. All this between ourselves," added the doctor, placing his first finger on his lips. "But may not I be permitted, I who ushered this lovely child into existence, to know what it is she fears, and what happiness she hopes for?"

The Countess then told him, in a few words, the history of Tolla's heart.

"I do not see that Monsignor Rouquette figures in this," said the doctor.

"Mamma has forgotten to tell you that the only time Lello came to the country to see us, Monsignor Rouquette was with him."

"*Diamine!*" said the doctor. This was his favourite expletive. *Diamine* is a mild kind of oath which forms a substitute for *diavolo!* just as in French, *jarnicoton* does instead of *jarnidieu*. "Why, it was this Rouquette who broke off the marriage of the elder Coromila with a Venetian girl."

"We know it."

"In whose interest did he do that? Why, to please the prince and the cardinal! The colonel need not count. Now, both the prince and the cardinal will go before long to rejoin their ancestors; I would not give six months' purchase for the lives of either. Well then, my little angel, your plight does not seem to me to be so bad, after all. When the two old Coromilas are no more, Rouquette will no longer have any motive for opposing your marriage. Only have six months' patience and prudence, and recom-

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mend the handsome Lello to smother his flame without letting it go out."

The doctor's advice was scrupulously followed. There was indeed no necessity to recommend prudence to Lello. Madame Feraldi took upon herself the care of making her two children happy. Lello came every evening at the *Ave Maria*, to spend an hour with his mistress; after which he ran off to tell his beads in the family circle; then he dressed and went into society, where he again met Tolla. The days that she did not go out, he contrived, without attracting observation, to deduct from his evening amusements an hour or two to spend with her.

They had adopted, in the saloon of the Feraldi palace, a window embrasure as large as some of the rooms which our Parisian architects build us; and of it they had made their own particular sitting-room, their inviolable domain, the sanctuary, so to speak, of their love. Seated opposite each other, their elbows leaning on the window sill, they recommenced each evening that everlasting conversation which the human race has repeated for so many ages without ever finding it monotonous. Sometimes, having exhausted words, they kept silence—that lovers' silence, which is the sweetest of all languages. Sometimes, leaning one against the other, hand in hand, and tears not far from their eyes, they repeated over and over again two words, in which were concentrated all their thoughts and all their hopes—

"*Lello mio!*"

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"*Tolla mia!*"

"My Lello!" "My Tolla!" It is indeed true that Italian is pre-eminently the language of love. The voice dwells gently on the first syllable of *mia*, and gives to the word thus lengthened out, all the sweetness of a caress.

Lello and Tolla used sometimes to quarrel, for which they only loved each other all the more. Quarrels such as these, always followed as they were by the kiss of peace, are the seasoning of happiness. They had promised each other that whatever might be their grievances, they would never part at night without being reconciled.

"I will not," said Tolla, "have thee go to sleep upon a cross word."

"Child," answered Lello, "should I be able to sleep?"

Tolla was too sincerely pious herself not to think much about the spiritual welfare of her lover. It may have been, too, that a secret instinct warned her that he would not forget his duty towards her so long as he remembered his duty towards God. In pleading the cause of Heaven, she was pleading hers as well.

Lello had never neglected those obligations to external piety which the laws of Rome constantly remind of, nay, impose upon all the subjects of the Pope, and which the most dissipated young men perform without a moment's opposition. He indeed did much more in appearance than even the most austere religion would have exacted; but Tolla had much difficulty in restoring to

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him the pious sentiments that he professed, indeed, but no longer entertained. She used to lecture him gently, and to implore him to conform his opinions to his conduct. "Thou art," she would say; "a singular species of bad Christian. Others think rightly and act wrongly; thou thinkest wrongly and actest rightly. I will not therefore say, as do my fellow-preachers, 'Conform your practice to your faith;' but rather, try to believe in what you practise."

As Lello's irreligion had nothing systematic about it, and was owing less to scepticism than to libertinism, it was curable. Tolla had the joy of converting her lover, of destroying the effect of bad company, and dispelling, by the breath of love, the clouds that had darkened his mind. The two lovers began to pray together, and prayer became Tolla's most cherished enjoyment. Lello wished that they should have the same confessor. "He will form another tie between us," said he; "and even our sins will be in common." Tolla accepted Lello's confessor.

Never had the young Coromila been so much in love; he was content to enjoy his provisional happiness without thinking of the conflict he should have to undergo in order to realize it. If from time to time, in the midst of their sweet conversations, the image of his father, his uncles, of that formidable family tribunal ever intruded upon his mind, he closed his eyes to it. When, in the first days of December, Toto returned to Rome, with Menico perfectly cured, he was amazed at the harmony which reigned between the lovers. Tolla

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had had her miniature painted to give to Lello. On the ivory behind she had written, *Aspettando !*—"in expectation." Manuel, on his side, had spent forty or fifty hours in the studio of M. Schnetz, who had painted a magnificent picture of him, as large as life, and even handsomer. The artist had wonderfully interpreted Lello's beauty, and brought out into strong relief the Roman element in his countenance. The two pictures were finished at the same time, though there had been no understanding between the lovers, and the very day that Lello took his portrait to Tolla, hoping to surprise her, Tolla drew from her pocket her miniature, framed in a little rim of gold.

When they met in society they conducted themselves with the greatest reserve, seldom danced together, and only looked at each other by stealth. During the first days after Tolla's return, however, Lello did betray himself a little, despite all his caution. He was in wild spirits, delight beamed from his eyes—in short, his change of countenance was remarked, and Tolla had to pray him to be more guarded. Upon that he became so very cautious, was so cold, so grave and stiff, that the whole town wondered what could be the matter with him. Tolla returned to the charge, and did not spare him her lessons. At last, after a few oscillations, he found his equilibrium, and looked neither victimized nor triumphant.

Madame Fratief and her daughter watched, with a thoroughly feminine perseverance, every movement of Lello's. To their great regret they were reduced to

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mount guard over him themselves. They had lost their worthy spy, poor Cocomero, who left them on the 6th of October of his own accord, without any one knowing what crotchet he had in his brain. Nadine supposed that he had returned to Naples; for he had been for some time back affected by a species of melancholy, which seemed to resemble home-sickness. Her mother inclined to believe that he had enrolled himself in the honourable corps of police, where his talents could not fail to be appreciated. Meanwhile, until he should condescend to give some tidings of himself, he had been replaced at home by a great lout from the Transtevera, and Madame la Générale replaced him as well as she could from home. She never met Lello in society without saying to him, "Take care, I have got my eye upon you!" Lello being thus duly warned, watched himself rigidly, and took a positive aversion to her.

She took it into her head that possibly Lello only loved Tolla through vanity, and owing to so constantly hearing it said that she was the prettiest girl in Rome. "We were very foolish," thought she, "to allow her to gain that reputation." Accordingly, the first time that she met Tolla, she exclaimed, "Why, good heavens! my dear love, what is the matter with you? You are grown quite thin and wan!" The next day, in another house, she said to Madame Feraldi, "Do, dear Countess, attend to Tolla's health; she is becoming quite an altered being!" She went on repeating to every one who would listen, "Can the prettiest girl in Rome be really ill?

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She fades day by day, and her parents do not seem to be aware of it. Do you know who her medical man is?" Five or six matrons, who had daughters to dispose of, were struck with the justness of Madame Fratief's observations. They discovered, with the eye of faith, that Tolla's arms were thin and her countenance worn; they told it on the house-tops, and soon there was nothing else talked of but the falling away of Tolla.

Now, Tolla not only had that brilliant health which women bring back from the country before winter sets in; but, in addition to it, that indescribable radiance, vivacity, and exuberance which happiness lends to beauty. Lello must have been blind, in order to believe her gone off. He contented himself with quietly smiling, when he heard one day a few kind souls whispering around him :—

"Do look at La Feraldi. Is not she sadly altered?"

"Poor girl! she is as yellow as an apple kept in a cupboard all winter through."

"The eyes so dead."

"The lips so pale."

"She has still her play of countenance."

"Yes, if that were to go too, she would be almost plain."

Mademoiselle Nadine, on her part, had raised a battery against Tolla's mother. She went on saying, with a little innocent air which was very becoming to her, "Do you know that Tolla is very fortunate to have such a mother? That Madame Feraldi is so clever that I quite admire her. My poor, good mother will never know how

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to attract a young man to our house—to flatter, seduce, bind, compromise, and lead him with bandaged eyes to the very church-door. Yet, after all, my good mother, I love thee just as thou art, with thy sublime simplicity. We are northern savages, it is true; but barbarism is better than too advanced civilisation. Do not let us envy the tact of the clever ones; but keep the whiteness of our native snows."

Nadine and her mother, by dint of frequent attendance at the Church of the Holy Apostles, acquired the certainty that Lello paid every evening a visit to the Feraldi palace. Madame la Générale took the circulation of the fact upon herself, and added to it a commentary of her own. "What do you think," said she to all the women of her acquaintance, "of a mother who sanctions such rendezvous as these? As soon as the Prince has entered the gates are closed; and the porter, a perfect brute, would not open them for a million of money. As for me, if a young man were admitted to pay his addresses to *Mademoiselle ma fille*, I should leave my door open to the whole world. People only conceal themselves to do wrong. The poor little girl is really to be pitied; she loves the youth; they shut her up with him. What would you have? And yet perhaps it may turn out well after all! Suppose the Prince were to go so far—so far that it became impossible to him to draw back! They would appeal to honour, love, gratitude, what not; nay, might it not be possible to constrain him to marry her. All faults are not mistakes, and there is often more skill dis-

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played in a quarter of an hour's imprudence than in ten years of virtue."

These calumnies were noisily spread throughout all the drawing-rooms in Rome. They were spoken out as loudly as possible, in the hope that they would thus reach the ears of the Coromila family. They were carefully stored up by three persons.

The first was Rouquette, who was rejoiced at them.

The second was Lello's brother, whom they alarmed.

The third was the Colonel, whom they amused.

As for the poor Cardinal, he had not time to learn what was said of his nephew. He died like a saint, on the eve of the Epiphany. Rouquette, now become the familiar companion and confidant of the Colonel, internally thanked the unknown allies who seconded his projects so well. The old Prince, confined by his infirmities to the seclusion of his palace, only heard such news as it was judged advisable should reach him. His eldest son wished to tell him the whole story; he was afraid that Lello might really be in the hands of an intriguing family, but the Colonel and Rouquette both dissuaded him from taking such a step.

"What do you hope from the intervention of the Prince?" asked Rouquette.

"My father will forbid him to return to that house."

"Will he obey?"

"Yes. My father may be old, infirm, blind, if you like, and more like a dead man than a living; but his will is inflexible, and Lello still trembles before him: he will obey."

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"Be it so; we will grant that he does show himself more submissive than you were in a similar case, still unfortunately the Prince is not eternal. If Lello consent to forget a while that he is of age, and his own master, he will recollect it at his father's death, and you will not know what further restraint to use. Beware of raising the will of the Prince between him and the girl he loves; the very day that death throws down that barrier, your prisoner will escape from you, and for ever."

"He is right," said the Colonel. "Besides, this plan of thine would draw down upon us family scenes, tears, prayers, and a whole flood of rhetoric, the very idea of which makes me yawn already. We will act when needed; there is no sort of hurry."

Madame Fratief, who was, however, in a hurry, said one day to the Canoness of Certeux, "My dear Madame! Rome is speaking of nothing else but the talents of one of your countrymen, Monsignor — Monsignor —. *Ach!* I have lost the name! That gentleman who prevented a Prince Coromila making a low match at Venice"—

"Monsignor Rouquette?"

"The same. Monsignor de Rouquette. You, who receive at your house the very flower of Roman society, will you be so kind, dear Madame, as to tell me whether this Monsignor de Rouquette is as clever as people say."

"You have never conversed with him?"

"I have never been able to meet him, and it is just the one thing that I am dying to do."

"If you are amiable enough to come and take tea with

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me this evening, I will serve you up Monsignor Rouquette between your first and second cup."

"Ah! my dear Madame, you are my good angel! Just imagine that Nadine and I have been imploring Heaven for the last fortnight to grant us an interview with Monsignor de Rouquette."

To which Nadine added with a little air of devotion: "This proves to us, mamma, that in order to obtain our wishes from Heaven, it is necessary to have recourse to the intervention of the saints."

When Rouquette entered the presence of the general's widow, he guessed from her few first words that he should find in her an interested but compromising auxiliary. He resolved at once to amuse himself with her and to make use of her too.

She thought herself exceedingly skilful in beginning by congratulating him upon the wonderful cure he had effected in the case of the brother of Lello: the transition being easy from the elder to the younger brother. But Rouquette most energetically refused to accept the praises that she wished to pour upon him. "It is not I," said he, "who have cured the eldest son of the Prince Coromila; all the honour of the cure belongs to God and to the healthy temperament of the patient. The Coromila family will not die away through low alliances."

"Ah! Monsignor, you reassure me. It was said that the Prince Lello was in great danger."

"I can assure you, Madame, that his health is as good as possible."

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"The air of the Feraldi gardens is dangerous in the evening, and poor hearts may catch a fever there."

"God has made man more robust than woman, and it often happens that he preserves his health, while she falls sick."

"The Church is very right in forbidding rash judgments. Men are sometimes so ready to accuse their neighbours! Why, one even hears whispers of vows exchanged, promises of marriage, rings placed on the finger, portraits given and received, all which perhaps have no better foundation than a few kisses."

"The world, Madame, is even more wicked than you think. They often go so far as to invent stories of a secret marriage."

"Indeed!"

"Of *tête-à-tête* excursions by night."

"On foot?"

"No, Madame; better still, in a carriage."

"I have never heard such a thing before."

"Have you ever heard of a father and mother accomplices in a clandestine marriage, and obliged to conceal their daughter's situation."

"They talk of that?"

"Often, Madame, so much wickedness is there in the world! But sensible people let all such calumnies fall to the ground."

"I will not leave them there, at all events," thought Madame Fratief.

"She will pick them up," said Rouquette to himself.

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The Canoness then came to take part in the conversation. "You are speaking about marriage?" said she to Rouquette.

"Alas! Madame," answered he, "of what else can one speak in a country where love, and consequently marriage, is the sole interest of life, after the securing of salvation?"

"They say that your travelling companion is to marry the daughter of a Catholic Lord?"

"It is hoped that he will do so. If the negociations succeed, the marriage will take place in London in the month of May."

"Is it in London too," asked the Canoness, with a smile, "that you intend to marry Lello?"

"Who knows?—Certainly were I in his place, I should look out for a wife everywhere except in Rome."

"But why so? You may speak out, for all the Romans are gone, and neither Madame Fratief nor I shall betray you."

"Oh! Madame, I have nothing to say against Roman men or women either; but to my thinking, Rome is the one place in the world where married men have the worst prospect. In Paris, St. Petersburgh, London, the man who takes a wife marries together with her a whole host of protectors, friends, partisans, who engage themselves by contract to help him on in life. But at Rome, he marries a wife and nothing more. There are matches in France which give you the cross and a place in the prefecture; in England, a seat in Parliament; in Russia"—

"In Russia," eagerly added the General's widow, "a

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chamberlain's key, the second class of nobility, crosses, pensions, places, favours, fortune, and everything."

"You see, my dear ladies, that Rome is the patrimony of celibates, and that married men ought to seek their fortune elsewhere."

"As for France," said Madame Fratief, "it is a country wholly without any future. Those gentlemen of 1830 have turned everything topsy-turvy—the laws and the pavements alike. What is one of their deputies? A man who has not even a uniform! They speak of French peers: I ask whether they have even the privilege of flogging their servants? The aristocracy has fallen very low, since the suppression of the right of eldest sons."

"These rights are preserved in England. England is still advantageous."

"Yes; but how many Catholic families will you find amongst the English nobility? You may count them, dear Monsignor, you may easily count them. You have had the good fortune to find one excellent *parti* amongst that chosen few, but this is only a reason for not expecting another."

"Well then, Russia still remains open. Unluckily Russia is schismatic."

"Schismatic, Monsignor! Russia is not schismatic. No one ever said that Russia was so. There are schismatics in Russia, I own, but not nearly so many as people think. To go no further, is not all Poland Catholic? The Emperor is the most tolerant of men; he is the father of all his subjects, without distinction; he has never been

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accused of favouring schismatics. Suppose that *Mademoiselle ma fille* were to arrive in Russia to-morrow, whether with her mother, or with her husband, would she be less well received at court because she is a Catholic? You, Madame la Chanoinesse, you will be able to tell us if your brother the Marquis was obliged to become a schismatic in order to attain to the highest dignities in the empire."

"I have heard," said Rouquette shyly, "that in Russia, daughters only receive a fourteenth part of their parents' fortune."

"Let us make proper distinctions, dear Monsignor. It is true that they only do inherit a fourteenth part when they have brothers; but an only daughter, like Nadine and so many other heiresses, shares her parents' fortune with no one."

"As for that, we have here in Rome young men sufficiently wealthy to marry a girl without fortune."

"Right, Monsignor! You are a man of the old school. You do not give in to the ridiculous notions of the men of the present day! I know nothing that puts one more thoroughly out of patience than the question, 'What has she?' Why, my dear gentlemen, my daughter has what she has; marry her for herself, or I shall keep her. I will tell you the day after the wedding if she is without a penny, or whether she has ten millions."

At these words, "ten millions," Rouquette assumed so respectful an air, that Madame Fratief felt persuaded that she had taken him in. "Decidedly, Madame," said he,

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in leave taking; "I believe that were I Manuel Coromila, it is in Russia that I should look for my wife. But unfortunately, I am only a good adviser."

"He will go and work upon Lello!" inwardly thought the General's widow, intoxicated with hope.

"She will hasten to do the Feraldis all the harm she can," thought Rouquette, watching her departure.

A week later, nothing was talked of but the secret marriage of Lello and Tolla. People gave out the day, the time, the chapel, the priest, and the witnesses. These details, with their alarming precision, disturbed Manuel's brother not a little; he asked him whether or not they were true, and would only believe his positive denial when confirmed by Rouquette.

Tolla did not long remain ignorant of the calumnies circulated by Madame Fratief. One day that Madame Feraldi had assembled a few fashionable young ladies and some friends of Toto, to practise the mazurka, Tolla's two cousins called to congratulate her on her marriage.

"What marriage?" inquired she, blushing up to the eyes.

"It is very wrong of thee, Tolla, not to have told thy good cousins a word about it."

"Ah, ah, ah! how droll she is with her look of amazement!"

"We ought not to have been the last to hear of thy happiness."

"Just fancy, that on Sunday I go to a house, where the first thing that I hear is that you are Lello's wife.

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As for me, I burst out laughing, for I find the joke original enough. I go out, I meet Bettina Nigri and her mother at a church door; they stop me to say to me, 'Well, I hear you have got a new cousin!' 'How,' said I, 'is my aunt Feraldi confined again?' 'No, but Tolla is married to Lello.' Finally, mamma receives yesterday the very drollest letter possible. They write to her from Forli, saying, 'Your niece is married, we know that; nothing else is talked of here; do, then, give us the details of the occurrence.'"

Tolla remained mute with surprise; after having taken such pains to conceal her love, she found herself the talk of town and country.

Toto saw at once that all the witnesses of this scene had already heard the report of this pretended marriage, and further, that they believed it. He hastened to reply for his sister, "You have been deceived, my dear cousins, and should you hear this foolish invention of our enemies repeated, you may answer it truly by affirming that Tolla is not married."

Tolla added with ill-disguised indignation, "And that she is not the girl to accept the disgrace of such a union, and that she despises a clandestine happiness, and that she would not have a king upon such terms, and that she will never degrade herself so much as to accept the hand of one who is afraid of marrying her in the open day, and before the whole world!"

The two cousins vied with each other in excuses.

"Forgive me," said Philomena; "I did not mean to

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pain thee; but as the whole world was speaking about this marriage, I thought — Forgive me" —

"But are you not foolish," said Agatha, "to weep for such a trifle? And if even it had been true! Private marriages are as good as any others as soon as the priest has had any hand in them, and they are infinitely more amusing."

That evening, Lello came with Philip. They found Tolla in tears, and she told them what she had heard.

"This is an invention of La Fratief's," said Lello. "For a week this report has been going about. My brother has mentioned it to me."

"And what didst thou reply?" asked Tolla.

"I replied that rumour had lied, and that I should never have taken such a step without consulting my friends."

"Thou didst not say anything about our engagement? Perhaps it may now be time to inform thy family of it."

"My dear love, my father is worse than ever since the cardinal's death. If, by any chance, he should have been prejudiced against our schemes, the declaration that I should have to make might be a dreadful blow to him. Is it not better to wait till his health be stronger, supposing indeed that his recovery be possible?"

"Let us wait!" said Tolla. "I will close my ears not to hear the calumnies of our enemies."

"Do better still," added Pippo. "You are accused of being privately married. Were I you, I should give those precious accusers the comfort of being right. Shall I go

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and look you out a priest? I will be your witness, together with some other trusty and discreet friend. Suppose that the thing should transpire, nobody will believe it. The report is antiquated, it is actually a week old. Besides, is truth ever believed?"

"What do you think of this plan, Tolla?" asked Manuel.

Tolla replied in a firm and decided voice: "My friend, it may be that yesterday I should have said yes. But after the scene of this morning, I should despise myself if I were capable of consenting. We will wait."

Manuel and Philip remained till midnight at the Feraldi palace. On the morrow, the report was current in Rome that Tolla and Lello had gone out together in the twilight. A person worthy of belief deposed to having recognised them in the alleys of the Pincio, leaning tenderly one on the other. Another witness had met them in a carriage about a hundred steps from the Porta del Popolo; a third had surprised them in a little low pony-chaise in the avenue leading to the Church of St. Paul; a fourth had discovered them riding in the avenue of Albano. Another had not indeed seen them himself, but he had extracted the truth from the coachman who drove them out every evening. These counter evidences, which ought to have negatived, only strengthened each other. People preferred to believe in Tolla's ubiquity rather than in her innocence. A formidable league was organized against her. All the mothers who had once envied, all the girls who had been jealous of her, all the

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young men who had vainly wished to please her, enlisted under the orders of Madame Fratief. The friends who tried to defend her, the Marchioness, Doctor Ely, Pippo, were overwhelmed by numbers. Each day the poor girl heard some new calumny, for which she consoled herself by relating it to Lello, who promised to pay her in happiness for all that she now had to suffer.

In the last days of January, however, her lover's consolations failed her. The old prince had a fatal attack, which lasted nearly three weeks. Lello, nailed to his father's bed-side, had hardly time to write a daily note to Tolla. She had consequently no one to whom to confide her sorrows: for how could she tell her mother of all these calumnies, in which that mother was more severely treated even than herself?

She shared, too, all Lello's sorrow, and, though she had never seen the Prince of Coromila, she wept for him as for a father. She did not for an instant remember that it was this old man's death which was to secure her marriage. The prince died. Tolla was two or three days without appearing in society; feeling herself quite incapable of restraining her tears. Society murmured. If she had, on the other hand, been seen smiling and waltzing, people would have declared that she was triumphing over the prince's death.

Lello, always prudent, wrote to her on the morrow of his father's funeral: "I find that thy absence from the theatre last night was remarked. Let this be to thee a lesson for the future."

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It was Madame Fratief who had taken the trouble of running from box to box looking for Tolla: "Have you seen Tolla?" No. "How is it that she is not here? She who so adores Bellini's music? I had something to say to her. I will call upon her after the opera is over. But what was I thinking of! I should not find her. She has some one to console."

And yet it was well known that Lello was spending the evening with his friends.

By way of excusing her depression, Tolla gave out that she was ill. It was but half an untruth: for the poor girl was really giving way beneath her excessive anxieties. Her enemies took her at her word, and began to carp at this illness.

The young Nadine took to saying ingenuously to all the girls of her own age, "Do try to find out what is the matter with Tolla. My mother knows, but she will not tell me. It appears that it is some complaint which young girls never have, that it is not fatal, but that it lasts for many months."

When Tolla heard this new invention, anger cured her at once: she felt her strength redoubled; her whole being expanded, her whole energies strained to the utmost. She again went into society, frequented theatres, balls, evening parties, danced all night through, waltzed down her partners, had supper at four o'clock in the morning, drank champagne, forgot her cloak when she left the ball-room, and proved that she possessed an iron constitution.

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Yet her character no wise gained by all this. Some said: "It is all done to conceal her *situation*. But," exclaimed the Marchioness Trasimeni, "she has a figure that you might span. Do you suppose that she can leave *her situation* at home?"

Others went about whispering: "She does not take care enough of herself for a person just recovering from an illness." One wit pointed out the coincidence between the death of Coromila, and the momentary retreat of Tolla. "The Coromilas bid fair to last long, was the general remark. If one dies, another is soon born. Coromila is dead. Long live Coromila!"

Madame Fratief, on seeing Tolla waltz, charitably observed to those sitting next her: "Unhappy girl! she wishes then to destroy two lives at once!"

Meanwhile Lello had allowed himself to be carried off to the Albano villa, where all that now remained of his family had assembled to conceal their sorrow, and to forget it. They went out shooting, they took long rides and long meals. Rouquette skilfully organized this indolent, decent, and self-indulgent life. Lello had time given him not exactly to envy, but to guess at the charms of a bachelor's life. However, the neighbourhood of Lariccia, the recollections of last summer, perhaps even his idleness, the solitude and the good living, all contributed to revive his love for Tolla. One evening as he left the dinner-table, he wrote to her as follows: "I have told it thee a hundred times already, but I choose to write it, because writings last: I shall always love thee, and I

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shall know how to die rather than forget such an angel as thou art. God sees my heart, and in his presence I swear to thee eternal fidelity."

"How he loves me!" exclaimed Tolla when this letter was read by the family circle.

"That is a precious document," added Toto. "Do not lose it, my child. If, after such an oath as that, he were to refuse to marry thee, the Pope would oblige him to do so."

The Coromilas returned to Rome in the beginning of March, and Lello retook his place in the window seat at the Feraldi palace. After a month of nearly perfect happiness, despite the outrageous calumnies afloat, he one day appeared sad and preoccupied.

"What ails thee?" asked Tolla, looking as it were into his very soul.

"Nothing. Family vexations."

"Thou hast told all to thy relatives?"

"No."

"They have been speaking to thee of me?"

"No."

"What vexations canst thou have? Thou art of age, free, absolute master of thy conduct, rich,"—

"Less so than thou thinkest."

"So much the better! I should like thee to have nothing at all; I should then be sure of inhabiting our little domain of Capri. Dost thou remember Capri? Let us see if thou hast profited by my lessons of geography! Capri is bounded on the north, by love; on

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the east, by fidelity; on the west, by many children.... Thy father has, then, disinherited thee?"

"Almost."

"What happiness!"

"He has left a fiefment of trust to my uncle."

"What a pretty word! What does it mean?"

"That, in consequence of a secret order of my father's, about which his will says not one word, and of which the execution is confided to my uncle, my eldest brother will be five times richer than I."

"Thus, my poor friend, thou wilt not perhaps have more than two millions."

"Perhaps not."

"Then come to Capri; I promise thee a hundred millions' worth of happiness!"

Lello, however, was telling a falsehood, and money had nothing to do with his sadness. His father had made neither fiefments of trust nor any arrangements of the kind; he had simply left to the Chevalier a magnificent estate, which was naturally to be divided between the brothers after their uncle's death.

As for the true cause of the sorrow, the remorse, and the embarrassment of Lello, this was it:—

The eldest son of old Luigi Coromila, become himself Prince since his father's death, had now concluded the negociations relative to his marriage, and his departure was fixed for the 30th of April. He was to embark at Civita-Vecchia for Marseilles, to cross France, make a short stay in Paris, arrive in London for the

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gaieties at the Coronation of Queen Victoria, and return with his wife through France, Belgium, Germany, and Lombardy. Every day, in Lello's presence, they worked away at the completion and improvement of this seductive itinerary. The Chevalier and Rouquette occupied themselves with nothing else, while the young Prince enrolled his suite, and ordered his liveries. All the tables in the house were covered with travelling-maps, and guide-books were to be found on every piece of furniture. At all the meals, Rouquette made a practice of dilating complacently upon the pleasures of Paris. The Chevalier replied by drawing a picture of the magnificence of the Court in London. Although the Prince meant to get his attire chiefly in Paris, he ordered his court-dress at Rome, and Lello dreamed of it three nights running. Rouquette, who was to be of the party, had also long conferences with his tailor. Neither the Chevalier nor the Prince made any definite propositions to Lello, but they often pointed out in his presence that this long Odyssey would not last much more than two months. The Chevalier would joke pleasantly upon the stay-at-home temperament, upon the race of snails, and the young mice who dare not leave their holes. The Prince promised himself far more enjoyment of the charms of domestic life after a season of travel and adventure.

These indirect manœuvres went on till the beginning of April. Perhaps the family would have lost its cause, after all, if Tolla had had one grain of coquetry; but Lello's happiness was too pure and too equal for him

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to dread the consequences of an absence of two months.

Meanwhile, Morandi wrote to the Countess to say that he had seen her daughter at Lariccia, about the middle of September last; that he had found her even more beautiful than she had been represented to him, and that if Tolla had only refused his hand, because of her dislike to leaving Rome, he was ready to leave Ancona for the capital.

Victor Feraldi wished this letter to be read to Lello. Tolla positively opposed the plan. "Such a confidence as this," said she, "would look like a threat," and yet jealousy would have come in very opportunely to spur up Lello's love, and bring back his thoughts, which were every moment wandering in the direction of England and France.

Tolla had so little idea of this, that she used to spend part of her evenings in teaching him French. The progress made was not very rapid; the master and the pupil vied with each other in involving themselves in the conjugation of the verb *to love*. Sometimes, by way of a truce to grammar, she would open a French book, place it before him, and gently obliged him to spell, read, and translate it. The lesson over, the grateful pupil embraced his dictionary! One evening they read together the fable of the *Two Pigeons*. When Manuel had laboured through it, word for word, Tolla took the book from his hands, and translated the whole fable into an irregular rhythm or rather a cadenced prose; and her

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bright, sonorous voice took an indescribably soft, tender, deep tone. Lello fancied that he beheld that god-daughter of the fairy, who never opened her mouth without dropping pearls and emeralds around. When Tolla took his hand, translating, meanwhile, the beautiful verse :—

'Lovers, happy lovers, do you wish to wander?
Let it be, then, to some shore not far away!
Be ye each to other always worlds replete with beauty,
Ever varied, ever new, from day to day:
Make up for the rest of earth—let all else be nothing worth!'

he buried his head, and burst into tears.

That very morning, in coming from mass, his uncle had said to him, "There is one thing that occasions me much remorse."

"You, my uncle!"

"Yes; I am an unkind relation. Thy brother is going to set out for London, and instead of accompanying him, I remain in Rome. I prefer my own customs to duty."

"Your conscience is too scrupulous. Does my brother want to be led about? Is he not old enough to take care of himself?"

"Zounds, yes! And if he had been going down there for his own pleasure, I should remain here for mine, and content myself with simply wishing him a prosperous journey; but he is setting off to get married, and I blush to think that the heir of the first house in Italy will have to go to church without a father, without an uncle, without a brother, the only one of his family in short, just as if he were some poor foundling. If I were but one year younger, I should pack my trunk."

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"But, my dear uncle, you are in excellent health, thank God! and in no one way broken. And besides, London is not so very far off, and you might take short stages."

"What! can you really suppose that it is the journey which keeps me back? No, no; I am not afraid of a passage or two on a good steam-boat, nor of some hundreds of leagues in a post-chaise either. The idea of a man of my constitution caring for such trifles! No, my friend, what would kill me would be pleasure."

"Pleasure!"

"Yes, pleasure. You have been born in Rome, and have never left this blessed country; therefore you can form no idea of the consuming kind of life people live in London and Paris. Breakfast in public, dinner in public, the theatre in the evening, after the theatre a ball, returning home overpowered with fatigue to find a whole volume of invitations for the morrow; to have to dress three times a day, to wear one's-self out in visits, to ruin one's-self in compliments; to attract the attention of a whole people, to be the event of the day, the favourite of fashion, the lion of the season; to have to guard and watch one's-self, to have, in short, a public part to play like an actor on the stage, or a preacher in the pulpit; is that the sort of life for a man of my age, and do you not see that I should sink under it before the end of a month?"

"But, uncle, you are not afraid of a good dinner; you go to the theatre every evening; not a ball is given

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without your being invited to it, and you do not suffer from it."

"Poor boy! do you suppose that in Rome one ever does dine? One only takes nourishment. You can have no conception of the sorceries of those French cooks, their terrible delicacies which seduce the eyes, captivate the olfactory nerves, and increase the appetite a hundred-fold; of the diabolical gaiety which sparkles midst their feasts, the noise of the corks as they bound up to the ceiling, the ringing of the glasses heaped up before each plate, the lustre of the crystal, the distracting variety of wines; in short, it is a very hell, I tell thee, and I should return from it burnt to the bone. Long live our plain Italian fare, which we eat quietly on our ancestral plate! Long live our tranquil and simple theatres, where one goes only to hear the music, and to talk with one's friends in the shade! That cursed French Opera is a tumultuous furnace, where the prettiest women in the world go and display their shoulders beneath a radiance worse than sunshine. And as for the balls, celestial powers! how little they resemble our pretty little *soirées*, enlivened by country-dances, whist, and lemonade! Picture to yourself a formidable medley of luxury, elegance, coquetry, delirious music, scandalous dresses, unbounded liberty, staircases crowded with flowers, sideboards laden with viands; suppers, in short, calculated to raise the dead and to kill the living! It is a spectacle well worth seeing for once; I have seen it, it did not kill me, but I shall not be found there again. And yet Heaven is my

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witness, that I would gladly accompany thy brother if I could."

This fascinating satire upon Parisian pleasures took all the effect hoped from it;—Manuel offered to go with his brother. The word was no sooner spoken, than the Colonel, without allowing him a moment's time to reconsider it, ran off with him to announce it to the whole house. Either chance, or else the foresight of Rouquette, had so contrived matters, that there was a dinner-party of twenty that very day. Lello had gone to the Feraldi palace to inform Tolla of what the whole town was to know on the morrow; but the fable of the "Two Pigeons" took away his powers of speech, and he wept on remembering that he had condemned himself to depart, and that they had cut off from him all hope of retractation.

He went to bed self-dissatisfied, not knowing what he should say to Tolla, and much at a loss to justify himself in his own eyes. By dint of a good deal of reflection, he hit upon the expedient of asking Madame Feraldi herself, to tell all to her daughter. "The blow will be less severe," thought he, "if it does not come from me." To pacify his conscience, he promised himself that once out of Rome, he would find courage to ask his uncle's consent. Twenty times had he opened his lips to tell him all, and a foolish timidity had always prevented his uttering the name of Tolla. "It is my uncle's presence which embarrasses me," thought he; "I shall have more courage with my inkstand before me." He was very late in going to sleep, and dreamed that he was a pigeon driven about by a

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storm. He was awaked at nine o'clock the following morning by a visit from Rouquette.

"Is it you?" said he, rubbing his eyes. "I am very glad to see you. Do you know the fable of the 'Two Pigeons?'"

"I know it by heart. It is a charming romance of three pages. Its moral, especially, is admirable."

"You think so?"

"No doubt, and I recommend you to reflect upon it. This fable proves, better than any sermon, that two brothers ought not to travel one without the other."

"Two lovers?"

"Two brothers!"

"I had understood that the fable treated of two lovers."

"Who has been passing off that joke upon you? There is no more love in the fable than in the Cardinal-vicar's cap. Only listen:—

'The other said, What would you do?
Would you then leave your brother true?'

And again:—

—'Alas! I'd say, It rains indeed;
Has then, my brother, all he'll need,
Good bed, good supper, and the rest?'

My brother, do you hear? And besides, who is there that would say, 'And the rest,' but a brother? And the brother replies:—

'Soon I'll return, and faithfully relate,
All my adventures to my brother dear.'

Can you honestly suppose, that if lovers were concerned in them, French parents would teach these verses to their

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little girls? And moreover, La Fontaine knows the human heart too well to wish two lovers to remain pinned to each other. He knows that the strongest attachment could never resist that ordeal, and that it would die of *ennui* at the end of a few months. Whereas absence, which is the death of friendship and all cool sentiments, only exalts those of a violent character. What woman has given to the world the brightest example of fidelity? Penelope, whose husband was absent twenty years. Lucretia repulsed Sextus because her husband was at the camp; she might perhaps have listened to him if Collatinus had been at her heels. It is in friendship that the maxim holds good, 'The absent are always wrong;' in love, it is just the reverse—the absent are always right. The little flower which says, 'The more I see you, the more I love you,' is an oracle in friendship, but a goose in love."

Strengthened by these fine arguments, Manuel went at three o'clock to the Feraldi palace. They had just risen from table. The Count, the Countess, and Toto, were taking coffee in the drawing-room. Tolla was dressing to pay some visits. Lello looked at those before him with an embarrassed smile.

"I am very glad," said he, "that Tolla does not happen to be here. It is your aid that I am come to invoke."

"And against whom?" said the Count.

"Against her. If you do not come to my assistance, the least that she will do will be to tear out my eyes."

"My dear client, this is an affair quite out of my juris-

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diction. Take care of your own eyes, if you are anxious to preserve them."

"If I am, it is because they enable me to see Tolla."

"There is now nearly a year since your eyes have been in equal danger from her, and you have not lost one yet."

To which Toto added, "With all the eyes she has torn out, one might make a peacock's tail—might one not? Come now, confess; what hast thou done?"

"Nothing as yet; but I am meditating a little escapade."

"Give up thine escapade, and I will guarantee thine eyes."

"Impossible, my friend; I have given my word. There is a journey in question."

"To Albano?"

"Further; but it is arranged that we shall travel post-haste, and that our absence shall not last long."

"A week?"

"More than that. In short, since I have begun this devil of a confession, know that my uncle, although much against my inclination, in order that my brother should not be alone at his wedding, has determined, not being himself able to leave Rome, where he has all his fixed habits, to make me set out to London, and it was impossible for me to refuse. You understand that if Tolla"—

He had not time to conclude his speech. Toto, the Count, and the Countess, had started up round him as if moved by some spring.

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"You are weak, Lello Coromila," said the Count, severely.

"Coward heart!" cried Toto.

"It will kill her," said the Countess.

"Listen to me," rejoined Manuel, in a tone of emotion. "I swear to you that I love Tolla, and shall marry her. And now, listen to me further. My uncle and my brother, who are all my family, ardently desire that I should take this journey. I suffer more than you could ever believe at the very thought of leaving Rome; but I should like to conciliate opposing duties. If I show myself obliging to my friends, I depend upon their paying me in return. I attend my brother's wedding in order that he, ere long, may attend my own."

"Is not Monsignor Rouquette to be of the party?" asked the Count. "He has obtained three months' leave of absence from the Cardinal-vicar."

"That shows you," said Manuel, eagerly, "that our absence will not be a long one—three months at furthest, possibly only two."

"How long," inquired Toto, "did his journey to Venice last?"

"I do assure you, my friend, that they wrong that poor Rouquette. I have been, for the last six months, studying him, without his knowledge, and I have learned to do him justice. He is fond of me, and is more likely to side with us against my family, than with my family against us."

"Since you have confidence in M. Rouquette," said

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the Countess, bitterly, "let us be seated. You have seen the agreeable impression made upon us by the news of your departure; judge from that of the effect that it is about to take upon Tolla."

"Dear Countess, I shall suffer more than she. Help me to soften the violence of the blow. I feel that I have no more courage left."

"You ought to have plenty," said Toto; "for certainly you do not expend much of it at the Coromila palace."

"Well then, I own it! I am weak, I am cowardly; I am afraid of my uncle, though he be the best of men; I am afraid of my brother—I am afraid of everything. Overwhelm me with reproaches—you may do so, I freely allow you; there are moments, indeed, when I despise myself! But what would you have? I have promised to set out, my word is pledged, the whole town knows it. Yesterday at dinner, in my presence, they announced my departure to more than twenty people! But does all this prevent my loving your sister, and marrying her on my return? Does the foolish promise that they have extracted from me cancel all the vows that I have pledged to you?"

Manuel stopped abruptly; he had heard the voice of Tolla, who was singing as she tripped down the great palace staircase.

The poor girl opened the door, ran to Lello, and stopped short, terrified, when she got half way. She saw her father alarmingly pale, her mother agitated by a nervous tremor, her brother's eyes filled with tears, and her lover quite

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upset. They were all silent, and dared neither look at her nor at each other. Her heart seemed to contract; and she sank down on a chair without trying to break this gloomy silence. Three long minutes went by, during which nothing was heard but Madame Feraldi's sobs. At last, Tolla could bear it no longer.

"What has happened?" asked she. "Mother, father, brother, Lello, what is the matter with you all? Speak, I beseech you! I shall have courage; answer me, mamma, I beseech thee! Ah! you will kill me! For pity's sake, tell me what is to befall me!"

"Poor child!" replied her mother, "thou wilt know it but too soon."

She asked no more; she ran into the adjoining room, and burst into tears, without as yet knowing why. That first moment over, she regained her self-possession, and resolutely re-entered the saloon.

"I have wept," said she. "You see that I am calm. And now I demand to know what I am condemned to suffer."

At the first mention made of the journey, she fainted away. Her mother and Toto carried her up to her room. The Count followed her, quite forgetting Manuel, who ran away like one distracted. As he passed the porter's lodge, he called out Menico, put two crown-pieces into his hands, and implored him to bring him news of his mistress. For two whole hours he had to wait in mortal anxiety. At last Dominique appeared, paler than usual, but with the same calm and indolent manner.

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"Speak out at once!" cried Manuel. "How is she?"

"Better, Excellenza. She has had strong convulsions, but she is asleep now: you have not quite killed her." To which he added, laying down the two crown-pieces on the mantel-piece, "Here is your money. You are going to travel, and will want it. Madame informs you that you may come to the palace to-morrow evening."

On the morrow, as he entered the room in which he had spent such sweet hours, Manuel was seized with a strange shudder. No one rose to meet him. Tolla was too weak to run towards him, as was her wont. The Count and Toto were dressed as if for some ceremonious occasion. The curtains that generally concealed the old family portraits had been removed, and Manuel could count ten generations of Feraldis around him. The Count, with a gesture of the hand, showed Manuel the arm chair destined for him, and then, in a voice firm but sorrowful, he spoke as follows—

"Manuel Coromila, you see that we here hold a family council. I have convened my ancestors to this solemn meeting: I would I could have convened yours as well. You are going to leave Rome for a long while; I say for a long while, because not more than a month is necessary to change the heart of a man of your age. You have not planned this journey yourself: it has been imposed upon you by your uncle and your brother. I know the reason of this. The ambition of your relatives will not consent to your marrying my daughter; and they trust

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to the pleasures of London and Paris to make you forget her. You were free to remain: you have consented to go. You have been free openly to declare your love for Victoria during the two months that have elapsed since your father's death; but you have persisted in your prudence and timidity. I do not accuse you. I reproach you neither with the offers that you have caused us to reject, nor with the incurable affection that you have awaked in my daughter's heart; nor with the calumnies which your assiduous attentions have drawn down upon us; nor with the scene of yesterday, and the grief with which you have filled my house; but I think that this may suffice, and that we have had enough of suffering. I see plainly that you love no longer, or that you love less, or that you do not love sufficiently for love to inspire you with courage. Your constancy hangs by a mere thread; and without all the promises and all the oaths that have escaped you, our poor Tolla would be already forgotten. Well, then, be happy. You need no longer be under any constraint: I give you back your word."

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CHAPTER VII.

MANUEL had listened with resignation to the Count's reproaches; but the conclusion of his address drove him wild. He had expected some severe language, but not this disdainful restitution of his liberty. He grew pale with rage, and stammered out some inarticulate words.

"Calm thyself," said Toto; "thou hast here only friends."

He rejoined with violence, "Friends! Count, if I were not accustomed to look upon you as a second father, I should not thus patiently endure a similar outrage. You believe me capable of breaking my faith!"

"No."

"Excuse me. When one says to a man, 'I give you back your word,' it is because one thinks him despicable enough to take it back. My name is Coromila, and the history of Venice, which is that of my ancestors, has never imputed to them either falsehood or treachery. What has authorized you to believe that I am less worthy than they, and that I am about to dishonour them all in my own person? I have promised to marry

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your daughter; I have done more, I have sworn it; I have not sworn it once, but fifty times, and by all that is most sacred; I have sworn it in writing—you possess the proofs, you have your hands full of my vows! And yet you esteem me so little as coolly to say to me, 'Be free; I will grant that you have promised nothing, written nothing, sworn nothing! Let us amicably decide that all your letters are forgeries, all your promises lies, all your vows perjuries!' Count, if this is the way to speak to men one esteems, what words then are left us to express contempt?"

"Manuel," rejoined the Count, "you have understood me ill, or rather I have expressed myself ill. God forbid that I should cast a doubt upon your honour, which is as dear to me as my own. This is what I meant to say, 'When you asked the hand of my daughter eight or nine months ago, you were still dependent upon a father's will. In engaging your fortune and your person, you were in some sort disposing of property that was not your own. It is possible, and in a manner natural, that the change that has since then taken place in your condition; the tenor of your father's will; the new interests that oblige you to conciliate certain persons; the views of your own family, which had not been expressly declared at that time, but which have since then shown themselves adverse to our projects; in short, time, which wears away all things, even the passions that believed themselves immortal—it is possible, I say, that some one of these influences may induce you not to break, but to regret, your pro-

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mises. If it were indeed thus, if you no longer loved my daughter save through a scruple of conscience, and only married her from a sense of duty, my duty would be, for her sake as well as for yours, utterly to break off the engagement. But if, on the contrary, I am mistaken; if I have been blinded by caution—the fault of my time of life—prove to me my error and remove my fears; take back those former vows that escaped you in the first fervour of your affection, and give me in exchange a serious and irrevocable promise, made in cold blood, in full possession of your reason and your will, in presence of all the obstacles whose existence you are aware of, and on the eve of a journey which you have been led to take in the hope that it may tear you from us for ever."

During this address of the Count's, Manuel felt the weight of the eyes of the whole family. After a fit of boldness, of which he never could have believed himself capable, his natural timidity had regained its sway. Sad and immoveable, he went on mechanically counting the flowers on the carpet, whose pattern stamped itself indelibly on his mind. He did not dare to look any one in the face, not even the Countess, nor her daughter, whose eyes sought his, that they might encourage him. He made an effort to look at Tolla, and raised his eyes as far as her hands, which hung down listlessly on her lap. Those little hands, so pale and thin, spoke more eloquently than the Count Feraldi. They reminded Lello of so many chaste kisses—so many sweet pressures! The first finger of the right hand had so often been raised in loving,

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smiling, threatening! How often, too, it had been placed on Lello's lips to enjoin his silence! The left hand wore the turquoise ring he had himself put there in one of his life's fairest hours, and which he had promised to replace by a wedding-ring. The thinness of those poor little hands seemed the summary of a long history of tears, cares, uncertainties, patience, resignation, of calumnies nobly pardoned, of prayers with clasped hands for the calumniators. The right hand, listlessly lying there, half open as if to receive the grasp of some loving hand, seemed to turn towards him, and to say, "Thou wilt, then, no longer have me!" Manuel heard this mute language all the time that he was listening to the words of the Count. These two addresses, the one firm and precise, the other vague and confused, struck on his spirit at one and the same time, like the song and the accompaniment of the same air. He rose from his seat, knelt down before Tolla, took her hand in his, boldly raised his eyes to the assembled family, and said, in a frank and resolute tone, "I swear"—

"Stop!" interrupted the Count. "Before binding yourself by this new oath, remember that it is to be irrevocable. If you now pledge again to my daughter that liberty which I have just restored to you, no pretext, no reasons whatsoever, will have power to set you free—not even the most formal opposition on the part of your relatives."

"Count! I shall spare no effort to have our happiness approved by my family; but if they obstinately persist in

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an unjust and tyrannical opposition, I shall remember that God has created me free. And now, by that God who has lavished upon your daughter the most adorable qualities, who has inspired me with the purest love for her—by that merciful God to whom she has reconciled me—by that awful God who never leaves perjury unpunished, I swear never to have any other wife than Victoria Feraldi!"

Tolla bent towards him to embrace him; but her joy was too strong for her—she fainted away. When she regained consciousness she instinctively clung to Lello's arm.

"Why dost thou go away?" whispered she in his ear.

"Cursed journey! I consented without knowing what I was about; I will retract my promise."

"Do not go! Thou seest how weak I am. Who can tell whether thou wilt find me again on thy return?"

Manuel wept a little, promised a great deal, and went away, reconciled both with the Feraldi family and with himself.

On returning to the Coromila palace, he found the tailor, the embroiderer, and the lace-maker, who had come to receive his orders for a court-dress. He was ashamed to announce to these tradespeople that he had changed his mind, and that he was not going to travel after all. So he allowed them to take his measure, discussed with them the cut, the embroidery, the lace, and did not find the conversation irksome. Rouquette came in in the middle of it; approved his taste, and predicted that he

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would eclipse Brummel in England. Then came in the Colonel, and said, "You, who are knowing in horses, must buy for me, as soon as you get to London, a thorough-bred mare for riding, and a pretty pair of carriage horses. You will use them while you remain in England, and send them off to me the day you leave it." However, in spite of the prospect of so agreeable a commission, Manuel screwed up his courage to the sticking-point, tried to say that he was not gone yet, and that he was afraid of undertaking so expensive a journey. But his brother appeared most opportunely, to reply, that he undertook to defray all the expenses. What could be replied to this? Tolla herself gave up combating the arguments of the tailor, the brother, Rouquette, and the Colonel, combined.

Lello was too fond of pleasure to sacrifice such an attractive expedition. Tolla was too fond of Lello not to forgive him for it.

In the hopes of charming away the thousand perils she foresaw, she did not spare her injunctions to Lello, who, on his part, was lavish of promises. She spent all the evenings of the month of April in asking and obtaining oaths and vows, without being able to feel reassured by them. She made Manuel swear that his absence should not last more than two months. "But," thought she, with a shudder, "if during those two months some other woman —" Manuel swore that he would shun every possible temptation to inconstancy. "Unhappy that I am," said she to herself; "temptations

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will seek him out—he is so handsome!" She reflected what she could possibly do to make his appearance less striking for these two months. It occurred to her to make him cut off his beautiful black moustache. When Manuel first appeared before her with his upper lip shaved, she thought him so strange and ugly that she believed herself safe. She made him promise, there and then, that he would never *put on* his moustache till he had returned to Rome. And to make sure that Rouquette should not steal away from her her lover's esteem, she got Lello to swear that whatever might be said against her, he would suspend his judgment till his return. "And as for me," said she, "whatever may be done or said—whatever proofs may be brought me, I shall never believe myself forsaken till thou thyself comest to tell me so." One morning, after having received the Holy Communion together, they knelt, side by side, before the Virgin's altar. Tolla vowed to enter a convent, if God did not permit her to belong to Lello. Lello vowed to retire to a hermitage at Capri, if misfortune or treachery prevented his marrying Tolla. Each invoked death, in case of these oaths being ever broken. Amidst these and similar protestations, the month of April passed quickly away.

When Rome heard of the approaching departure of Manuel, the unanimous opinion was that the Feraldis had lost the game! People even went so far as to say, that Lello would marry in France; nay, the better-informed actually named the lady he was to choose.

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Madame Fratief, alarmed by these rumours, began to fear that she had been making war for the benefit of some family of the Faubourg St. Germain. In order to have her mind set at rest, she invited Rouquette to dinner; but he, occupied with a thousand other things, and little careful to conciliate allies that were henceforth useless, got out of the invitation by an evasive answer. Madame Fratief and her daughter were fretted to death at knowing nothing. For one whole long month they were seen kicking their heels in all the saloons of Rome, their ears pricked, their noses in the air, watching for the slightest rumour, questioning every face they met, collecting every scrap of news, publicly pitying poor Tolla, privately anathematizing Monsignor Rouquette, and hunting for the not-to-be-found Lello, who spent all his evenings at the Feraldi palace.

The Marchioness Trasimeni was not at Rome. In consequence of a bad cold that she had had, Doctor Ely sent her off to Florence during the latter days of March. Philip had taken a month's leave of absence that he might accompany his mother. He returned alone on the 25th of April, and the first piece of news he heard, was that Manuel was to set out in four days' time.

He uttered a cry of surprise and anger. "And Tolla!" thought he to himself; "can I have been a fool all this while? I, who have just been preaching to my mother the injustice of her suspicions, and the folly of her fears, have I been letting myself be bamboozled by that old drunkard of a Colonel? We shall see."

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He went off at a bound to the Coromila palace. Manuel received him in the midst of a confusion of luggage. Rouquette, seated upon a trunk, offered him, with a sardonic smile, a Havannah cigar.

"Ah, my dear sir," said Rouquette, "how opportunely you arrive! We were regretting, but just now, the necessity of leaving without bidding you farewell."

"I come booted and spurred, you may perceive, and with the dust of Florence on my coat. You see, Monsignor, that I have lost no time?"

"Do you think so? It seems to me that you have been an age in that beautiful Tuscany."

"A month, Monsignor, not more. I am much obliged to you for having found the time long."

"So many things have happened in your absence! Sir, if man were wise, he would never leave his friends."

"Your words are golden, Monsignor; but do not you know that there are evil geniuses whose business is to separate those who love each other?"

"The Church calls them infernal spirits."

"Yes, Monsignor—infernal. If ever I got hold of any such by the ears!"

"Sir," rejoined Rouquette, in a mild voice, "those spirits that you speak of have short ears and long arms; one meets their arms before reaching their ears!"

"What the deuce are you about," interposed Manuel, "with your ears and arms of infernal spirits? Has Philip turned theologian? Come, help me a little in

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shutting this—give it a good squeeze—kneel—that's it —it's done now. How glad I am, my Pippo, that thou shouldst have arrived in time!"

"That is just what I was saying," added Rouquette. "Monsieur is come just in time."

"More so perhaps than you think, Monsignor."

"But I say exactly in time, to help your friend to close his portmanteau. I am going to see whether my valet is attending to mine. Marquis Trasimeni, you must have many things to say after so long an absence. Try, if you can, to make up for lost time. Good-bye for the present."

"Ah! you defy me, do you?" thought Philip. "Now then for my revenge. It is too late to prevent Lello setting out; the man who has just given himself the satisfaction of packing up his trunks, would never consent to undo them. He will go to France, to England, to the end of the world, if he takes it into his head; but they must not have the power of profiting by his absence, to murder my poor Tolla. I have still four days remaining in which to secure her a refuge against all calumnies; to compromise Manuel in the eyes of the whole world; to render it impossible to break off; to bamboozle the worthy Colonel in his turn, and to tie the hands of that Monsignor Rouquette, who has such long arms of his own. Four days, that's rather little, it's true, but it's enough; the longest battles have never lasted more than eighty hours. Forward, then!"

"What in the world are you dreaming about?" asked

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Manuel. "You have a very odd sort of a countenance to-day."

To which Philip answered with a tone of well counterfeited frankness—

"You inquire into it, brother? Well then, I am dreaming about that journey of yours, which may transform all my future life."

"And pray what connexion can there be between thy future life and my journeys?"

"You will know one day; but now speak to me of Tolla. I have very often thought of her during this long month that I have been spending far away. Everything is over between you two, is it not?"

"Over! Are you mad?"

"Come, own it to me honestly. I shall not quarrel with thee about it. I understand thy reasons—thy uncle, thy brother, Monsignor Rouquette, thy name, thy fortune—I have made many a reflection during this last month, and my views are changed. Besides, you would never make her happy. What did she say when you announced to her this *escapade* of yours?"

"She wept. She was slightly ill at first; but she forgave me afterwards."

"Adorable girl that she is! I have known her and loved her for twenty years now; we were brought up together, you know. Well, my friend, ever since I have attained years of discretion, I have asked myself if there can be any man who deserves such a wife! You will come back in six months?"

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"In two months."

"Six!"

"Two! I tell you."

"We'll say five, then. During these five months, will she remain with her family, or is she going to shut herself up in a convent?"

"What is the use of a convent? She will live as she always has done—with her mother."

"You are right: no convent. I should be too great a loser thereby; and besides, the Colonel would never hear of a step like that."

"And why not?"

"Zounds! Do you suppose that your uncle is sending you to Paris and London to hasten your marriage to her? He foresees all that may happen in six months; he prescribes for you both the favourite specific of fathers and grandfathers, old as Aristotle; for the lover, the fresh air and highway dust; for the beloved, the whirl of the waltz, the hum of dancers, and the dust of ball-rooms. And if the cure should prove rather tedious—if the lover crosses the sea without listening to the syrens; the river, without looking at the Undines; and the forest, without conversing with the Dryads;—if the young girl should be impertinent enough to go on obstinately loving the one she is ordered to forget—why then, great evils must have great remedies! A venerable relative, a family friend, an ecclesiastic, if need be, lays a snare for the poor unsuspicious child; a good calumny is spread across her path; her reputation is given one of those shocks that never

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can be recovered,—that will teach you, Mademoiselle, to walk straight! Remember Venice, and the loves of your brother. Do you suppose that that marriage would have been as easily broken off, if the simple fellow, before he left, had shut up his mistress in a convent? The convent, my friend, is the only fortress where the reputation of a girl can be really safe, because men never penetrate there. Virtue, indeed, is robust, and can preserve itself everywhere in the world, in balls and the *valse à deux temps;* but *reputation* is like a white robe which must be locked up in a drawer if we do not want it to be splashed by a clown, or torn by a rogue. Let Tolla remain in the world—I will answer for her virtue; I will not answer for her white robe."

"And you will not hear of my shutting her up in a convent?"

"In the first place, would she consent to it?"

"I will answer for that."

"Her parents?"

"Leave them to me."

"And the permission of the ecclesiastical authorities?"

"The Cardinal Pezzato will obtain it."

"But thy uncle?"

"He will only hear of the affair when it is settled."

"And Monsignor Rouquette?"

"I am more cunning than he.

"You are a pretty sort of man to keep a secret for four days!"

"Am I not, then, a Roman?"

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"How hot you are about the convent! And yet, my friend, if we take a calm estimate of things, there is no great peril in her continuing at home. What do you fear?"

"Everything!"

"No; you fear nothing as far as Tolla's heart goes, too fortunate fellow that you are! The only danger is, that a Rouquette at Paris, a Fratief at Rome, should impute to her as a crime a few innocent amusements. What is that to you? You can close your ears, and let them say on. What can they invent new, after what we have already heard? What credence could you give to their words, you who have already seen how these artists fabricate falsehood? If, in a month's time, they were to write you word that Tolla had been seen in a carriage, on the Albano road, with a young man at ten o'clock; if Monsignor Rouquette were to lay a bundle of anonymous letters on your desk, if they each were to inform you that you were the joke of Rome, just as you once informed your brother, would you not at once repudiate those stale falsehoods, worn threadbare as they are?"

"Yes; but if Tolla were really to grow giddy amidst the whirl of society?"

"Be at rest; I will watch over her, and never shall a woman's heart have had a more jealous guardian."

"But"—

"You do not know me, Manuel! Ever since childhood I have loved Tolla with a passionate friendship; but for thee I should doubtless have felt for her a lover's

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love. Judge, then, what would become of me if I saw that she betrayed thee for the sake of an unworthy rival."

"And yet"—

"As soon as you are gone, I shall become her body-guard; I will accompany her to every ball—I will no more leave her than her shadow does. In the evening, at the house where you used to pay her a visit, I will go and see her; I will sit in your place, we will speak of you, and sometimes we will weep together. Tears are less bitter when wiped away by friendship."

"Very pretty, indeed; but"—

"Cannot you fancy you already hear good-natured tongues saying, 'She loves Philip! She is to marry Philip! Philip has supplanted his friend!' I shall never imprint a fraternal kiss upon her brow, without its being heard of all over Italy. How heartily we shall laugh at it!"

"But by all the saints!".... violently burst in Lello.

"One other word. The convent has its advantages, I own; but what right have you to imprison the woman you love?"

"What care I for right!" cried Manuel. "Right or no right, I tell you she shall go the convent; and she shall stay there till I return; and she shall receive no visits there, save from her mother and her confessor. I am not jealous; but since you take upon yourself to be so, in my place, you shall see how well I will profit by your advice! What is the most severe convent we have?"

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"The *Sepolte vive* (buried alive)."

"That is too harsh—another?"

"St. Antoine Abbé."

"Do they receive boarders there?"

"Yes."

"She shall go to St. Antoine Abbé."

"But, my dear Lello, what do you think will become of me? You are going to London, you shut up Tolla. What friends do you leave me?"

"You will find others; one has always plenty of them. Where have I gone and put my hat? Here it is. My gloves? In my pocket. My dear friend, I do not send you away; but I am going at once to her, to her mother, to her uncle, to the Cardinal-vicar, to the Abbé la Marmora, and to the Superior of the convent."

"As for me, I am going home; and we will go together as far as the Holy Apostles."

On their way, Manuel kept saying to himself, with a feverish vivacity, "Ah, ha, Master Philip! you love her, and you do not know it! And she has not an idea of it! But my sight is keen, thank God! I was going to embark in a pretty sort of journey! Fortunately, the convent settles all."

Philip concealed beneath a depressed appearance, the most triumphant joy. "He is jealous, consequently he is still in love. How he took the bait! His eyes positively flashed at me; he must hate me now. Tolla will be happy, the convent saves all; it shuts the mouth of the Colonel, Rouquette, La Fratief, and the whole world: it

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renders all drawing back utterly impossible. When Manuel has once shut up his mistress in a convent, he will indeed be obliged to come himself and take her out of it!"

On the following day, Philip was breakfasting in his own room, when he saw Dominique enter. He offered him a chair, and a large glass of Marsala, brilliant as a topaz, and warm as sunshine. Dominique, like a well-educated domestic, accepted the wine and refused the chair.

"You come from *her?*" inquired Philip.

"No, *ser* Pippo; I come of my own accord. Do you know that *he* has the cruelty to shut her up in a convent?"

"Has she consented to it?"

"Is there anything that she can refuse him? Madame is in tears, but our men are contented. Our uncle the Cardinal went last night to St. Antoine; he has told all the circumstances to the Superior—the permission will be signed this very day; but they insist upon Mademoiselle concealing her attachment from the sisters and the boarders, and not allowing any one to guess at the reasons of her retreat. Poor girl! to be obliged to lock up all her feelings, to stifle her sighs, and to swallow her tears! And God only knows how long she may have to remain there, all alone, preying upon herself! Do you think they would permit me to enter the convent with her? I do not count as anybody. I—I am not a man; I am the dog of the house, that licks the hands of the master, and barks at the enemies."

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"Impossible, my poor dog! You are too like a handsome youth. The thing would be, to find some devoted girl who would consent to shut herself up for some months."

"Alas, *ser* Pippo! devoted people are rare. After you and me, I look in vain; I find no others."

"How? Amongst all the women in that house there is not one?"

"I do not know one. Only think, sir, two months of prison, perhaps three, or even more; perhaps a hundred days without seeing any one,—what a prospect for a woman!"

"What do you call that tall girl who rode off to fetch the doctor, when you got your head broken?"

"Amarella. She has not much heart, I can tell you; she is a girl who has her own views."

"Deuce take it! you are difficult to please, if you think she did not show sufficient devotedness."

"No, sir, what she did was not done for Mademoiselle, but for me."

"What of that? If she consents to enter a convent, I care little whether it be for love of thee or love of Tolla! What we want, you see, is that your mistress should not be alone; she would die of *eunui*, love, and silence. Go and find that girl; you have some influence over her?"

"I fancy so, *ser* Pippo; but I have never tried it, because she has her notions, and I have mine."

"Never mind your notions. Go and find this girl, tell her whatever you like, promise her whatever is necessary,

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arrange matters as well as you can, but persuade her to enter the convent: Mademoiselle's welfare is at stake."

"I go, sir, at once. Until now, I have never deceived any one; but Mademoiselle's welfare before all!"

On the 29th of April, at ten in the evening, Tolla and her maid entered the convent of St. Antoine-Abbé. They were conducted thither by the Count, the Countess, Victor, Manuel, Philip, the Abbé La Marmora, and Menico. The superior received Tolla from her mother's hands. She embraced her tenderly, and addressed to her a short and maternal exhortation as to the new duties she would have to fulfil, the privations to which she was condemning herself, the transition from the gay life of the drawing-room to the austerities of the convent, and the spiritual and temporal advantages that God reserved for her, as the reward of so virtuous a sacrifice. Tolla then said "Good-bye" to everybody. While she pressed Manuel's hand, two large tears rolled slowly down her pale cheeks. She bent towards him, and whispered in his ear—

"Here I am, where thou wishedst me to be; I shall remain here till thou comest to take me out: do not keep me waiting too long."

Menico was privately weeping the while. Amarella asked him, in a low voice, "Are those tears for me?"

"For whom else can they be?" answered he, blushing a little at this untruth.

When the superior had led away her new boarder, the parents and the friends of Tolla remained for some

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moments listening to the mournful grating of the heavy doors that closed upon her. The large parlour where they stood was cold and bare, and only lighted by a kitchen lamp, whose smoke rose in eddies to the ceiling. Nobody ventured to speak. Menico was the first to approach Manuel, and to say to him, in a loud voice—

"Adieu, Excellenza; I wish you a good voyage and *much pleasure.*"

"My poor girl!" murmured the Countess, stifling a sob."

"Countess," rejoined Lello, "it is here that I have wished to take leave of you and your family. It is here that I shall meet you in two months' time, to lead your daughter to the altar."

At the same hour, and while Lello was irrevocably pledging himself to marry Tolla, Rouquette and the Chevalier were supping merrily together. These two chosen vessels—the one vast and large as a tun, the other dry and knotty as a vine-branch—had already emptied six bottles of red Lachryma Christi, the most heady of all the wines of Italy. The Colonel was quietly sinking into that tranquil and decorous drunkenness which is the privilege of practised drunkards. In him, excess in wine produced a felicity without excitement, a torpor without oppression, a delicious annihilation. His large face, as powerfully moulded as the antique casts of Vitellius, got gradually suffused with equal layers of radiant colouring; his head fell back; his limbs gave way under him; till at length, all muscular tension

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being relaxed, he passed, without any sensible shock, out of the arm chair on to the floor, and from waking to sleeping. Rouquette, on the contrary, with staring eyes and a face spotted with red, was agitated and frisky in his drunkenness. He raised his voice, shuffled about on his chair, and revived himself from time to time by sudden starts; moreover, he was master of himself to the very last, never lost the habit of weighing his words, and was always wide awake to matters of business.

"My dear Rouquette," said the Colonel, in a thick voice, "you are a great man."

"Ha! ha!"

"You will do much if you escape hanging."

Rouquette sprang up like a barrel of gunpowder.

"Sit down again, you dazzle me. Could you not prevent your eyes turning round in their cages like squirrels? What were we saying? Oh, I know. You have saved the Coromila family once. A great family, Rouquette! I am proud of my name without seeming so; I would not give it away for a hundred thousand bottles of that wine before us. There is still the young one to save. He is much entangled, my dear Rouquette.

"Be tranquil, your Excellency: I am taking him away."

"Yes, but he will return."

"He will return so changed that his mistress will not know him again."

"Do not believe that, Rouquette. Such as you see me now, I have gone through the same story. Well then! she whom I.... how do you express it? betrayed? yes;

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she whom I betrayed always knows me again. Take great care of the young one."

"The same as of myself, your Excellency."

"If he were inclined to get into some foolish scrape or other, my friend, let him alone, it will help to divert his mind. I will pay for all. We do not consider money in our family."

"Here we are," thought Rouquette, who felt a thrill pass through him at the word *money*. "Your Excellency, I have already experienced your generosity."

"Yes, yes. The twenty thousand francs that you got after the Venice affair. You will see many others. This house is a mine of gold. Dig away, Rouquette, dig away! While you are working over there, we will occupy ourselves with the little girl; we will make out a reputation for her. What is wanted to damage a woman's reputation? Only words, nothing more. I will buy plenty of them: I don't care for expense. Tolla Feraldi must be quoted in all Italian families as a girl whose example is not to be followed. When the whole world speaks of her as a lost girl, Manuel will no longer dare to wish for her as his wife. Drink away, Rouquette. You are not so strong-headed as I am. I am a Roman of the old block, I am. I should have made a good emperor. As for you, my boy, you'll never be anything better than a pope. If you cure the young one, I will give you whatever you like. Will you have forty thousand francs? tell me. Forty. Answer at once, before I go to sleep,"

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A servant came in on tip-toe.

"What do you want?" muttered the Colonel. "Go to bed. Don't you see that I am asleep?"

"A very urgent letter for Monsignor."

"Give it him and go to bed. I forbid you to snore in my presence."

Rouquette tore open the envelope with a shaking hand. "From the Marquis Trasimeni," said he, stammering.

"Trasimeni! he has been asleep these fifteen years. Hush! he was my friend. If I were not afraid of awaking him, I could tell thee a good story. Do you know who he married, Trasimeni?"

Rouquette was no longer attending to the conversation. He had risen; he was leaning against the wall, close to a candelabra, and rubbing his eyes as he spelt out the following letter—

"Monsignor,—It seems to me an age since I have seen you. So many things have passed since our last meeting. My friend Lello has led Mademoiselle Victoria Feraldi to the convent of St. Antoine-Abbé, in order to secure her reputation, and to make known to all Rome that he is determined to marry her. I am surprised that you should have known nothing of this affair, for which the Cardinal-vicar has given his signature. It is then possible to have very long arms and very short ears! I have been looking for you for the last hour, to inform you of so interesting a piece of news. But it was impossible

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to find you. There are evil genii who make it their business to separate those who love each other.

"PHILIP TRASIMENI."

Rouquette uttered a sharp cry, came back to the table and read his letter over again. He wanted nothing more to sober him entirely. "Colonel!" cried he. The Colonel had disappeared under the table-cloth. Rouquette drew back the table violently, throwing over bottles and glasses thereby; he discovered an imposing Colossus indeed, but motionless as the basalt lions at the entrance of the Capitol. He tried to shake him; useless attempt! He threw a few drops of water on his face; but the formidable sleeper only aimed at him, by way of answer, a blow that would have stunned him, if he had not evaded it.

"Heavy brute!" muttered poor Rouquette. "And he has been learning to drink these fifty years! What is to be done? We set off to-morrow at five o'clock; and it is now midnight. Only five hours to drag that girl from her convent! Ah, if I were but Pope! You shall pay for this, Philip Trasimeni! If we leave her there, everything escapes me—Manuel, money, my prospects, the Coromilas! How came the Cardinal-vicar to sign? Does he know everything? Does he conceal things from me? Is he not in some way or other related to the Feraldis? If he were to escape me like the rest? Everything seems shaking, cracking, crumbling around my head. Ay, work away like a madman to build up your fortune, just

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that the mischief of a lad may throw it all down! So much for celestial justice! I must speak to Manuel! It is he who has committed this folly, and he must make up for it."

He left the dining-room, with a slightly reeling gait and ran to Lello's appartment. The servant, who had brought him the letter, ran after him, and stopped him with the polite firmness with which valets know how to oppose a master who has been drinking. Rouquette, exasperated by such contradiction, wished to throw the respectful obstacle out of the window. The valet threatened to call for help, and declared that he would not allow the repose of the Chevalier Manuel to be disturbed. Rouquette accordingly changed his tactics, and asked to see the prince. A valet and four lacqueys, attracted by the noise he made, appeared, all declaring that the prince had forbidden any one to enter his apartment, under any pretext whatever, before four o'clock.

"Very well," replied he, "leave me. I will go and try to awake the Colonel." At which all the men swore that they would be cut in pieces rather than shake the Colonel by the arm. "Then," said he, "open the doors, I will go out!" The worthy domestics asked each other if it would be prudent to let loose in the town so incorrigible a disturber of sleep. It was only after a heroic resistance, interminable objections, and cautions enough to exasperate a saint, that they drew back the bolts, and abandoned him, on the Corso, to the care of Providence.

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Rouquette wandered, for some moments, here and there as chance directed, not knowing at what door to knock, at so absurdly unconventional an hour. He looked up with a perplexed glance at the immense mansions which front the Corso, when he chanced to read at the corner of one of the streets leading from it, *Via Frattina.* He recollected that he was only two steps from the house of the General's widow, and, without paying any attention to the officious information afforded by the clocks of the district, which unanimously struck two in the morning, he ran to knock at the door. As will happen in such cases, the raps of the knocker first awoke the opposite neighbours, then the people in the next house, and finally, the tenant on the third floor, the Englishman on the second, and the tradesman on the ground floor, before they were heard at Madame Fratief's, who occupied the first floor. When, at last, the servant made up his mind to open a shutter to parley, Rouquette had to bear the cross-fire of fourteen different people, armed with fourteen candles, who levelled fourteen questions at him at once. He was necessarily obliged to refuse to give his name in the midst of so large an audience, who inquired amongst themselves since when the *Monsignori* had taken to paying visits at two o'clock in the morning. At last the door opened. Madame Fratief, wakened up in haste by the pleasant tidings, came running to him in so great a hurry that she forgot to put in her teeth. Rouquette, in as great a hurry as she was, to say the least of it, did not give himself time to apologize for the rareness of his

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visits, and all the other sins of omission which he had on his conscience. He went straight to the point, announced that he came, on the part of Lello, to take leave of these ladies. Things were going on well. Lello seemed to have made up his mind to find a wife neither in France nor England; he was coming back in two months; and, in their course, it was probable that the fair Nadine and her mother would hear from him. Unfortunately, Tolla, counselled either by her mother or some other intriguing spirit, had gone and thrown herself into a convent; all Rome would hear this in the course of a few hours, and the Feraldi faction, profiting by Lello's departure, would not fail to spread abroad that it is he who has taken her there; a most dangerous calumny, which must at all costs be contradicted, by forcing the silly young girl to re-enter the world. So long as she should remain at St. Antoine Abbé, no one could have any hold upon her, and she would have a hold upon Lello. She would assume the attitude of a victim, and hound on all the blubberers in Italy. "If I had but one day to spare," said he, "I should know well enough how to drag her from her retreat; but I am to set out at five o'clock in the morning for Civita-Vecchia, at three in the afternoon for France, and steam-boats are not in the habit of waiting. Act, therefore—your own interest is at stake. Say whatever you like, that it is not Lello who has taken her to the convent, but the police; that she has been sent there as punishment; if that takes at all, she will come out to prove that she is free; and once out, she will not be permitted

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to re-enter. Make the convent insupportable to her; if she has any servant with her, take that servant away In short, you are a woman of intellect; watch your opportunities; devise circumstances for yourself—speak, act, stir; all means are good—money, promises, prayers, threats—provided only you can get her out; and they are all within your reach."

"But, dear Monsignor, what would you have me do? I have neither credit, nor power, nor — (she stopped in time, just as the word money was on the point of her tongue,) nor auxiliary. I had, indeed, once a devoted servant; but he disappeared on the 6th of October, without even bidding me good-bye."

"And carrying off your jewels with him?"

"Good heavens! poor fellow, no such thing! The Englishman up stairs accused him of having taken his gun; and it was that, perhaps, which gave him a horror of the house. When I had that good Cocomero here, I knew everything that was going on; he would even make his way into the Feraldi palace to bring me news. But the blockhead who has replaced him is good for nothing at all; he might as well be deaf and dumb, blind and maimed."

"Do not let that be any obstacle! Would you like me to leave a man with you?"

"Yes, certainly."

"The police is under the jurisdiction of the Cardinal-vicar. I have some credit with the Board; I can place a policeman at your service."

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"Do so, Monsignor, do so!"

"Wait a moment! About six months ago, I enrolled among them a fellow who seemed to me to have just committed some unlucky action or other; but for every sin mercy; such is the motto of the police. He earnestly implored me to station him out of Rome; I offered him Albano, Lariccia, or Velletri; but he asked, as a great favour, to be sent off in some other direction; he is now at Civita-Vecchia, watching the liberals; and his superiors are satisfied with him; I will despatch him to you this very day."

"But suppose he were to refuse to return to Rome?"

"I should like to see him try to refuse anything. One is always very sure of a man's devotedness when one has some hanging matter to bring against him. Adieu, Madame, I am going to work for you; help me. I kiss your fair daughter's hand!"

"She sleeps, poor innocent, while we occupy ourselves about her happiness!"

Nadine was listening at the door.

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CHAPTER VIII.

Rouquette, on his return, found a ready-harnessed carriage in the court of the Coromila palace. Manuel and his brother, ballasted with a cup of chocolate, were walking about smoking, while a waggon was being filled with luggage. The Colonel still slept like Noah after the first vintage; having taken his leave the previous evening in order to be able to rise only at mid-day. All the household servants came bareheaded to kiss the hands of their young masters. The Prince distributed a large bag of money amongst them. Rouquette, whom they examined as if he were a natural curiosity, would have liked to distribute a few cane strokes as well. They set out at five o'clock precisely.

All the way to Civita-Vecchia, Manuel yawned, smoked, sighed, and looked out of the window; his brother read the first canto of Don Juan in English; and Rouquette slept. The four servants, who were to be taken to London, astonished the larks by the brilliancy of their new buttons. When they entered the town, the postilions smacked their whips so superbly, that it was supposed to

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be the equipage of the Duke of Tuscany, whose arrival was announced for that day. The garrison presented arms, the drums beat the march, and the porter at the gate obstinately refused to examine the passports. The two brothers galloped through the midst of this official enthusiasm, and found their steward at the port, who had come over the previous evening to secure their berths, and to arrange matters on board the boat. Rouquette ran off to the police station, gave his name, and asked for François the Neapolitan. He had some difficulty in recognising his *protégé*. François the Neapolitan, the former Cocomero, had shaved off his whiskers, and let his hair grow. This change of decorations, joined to the dread of the neighbouring galleys, the sight of which had thinned him horribly, had given him quite a different-looking face, as long as it was broad before. Ever since the 6th of October, and the *accident* of Menico, François had always slept with one eye open; consequently his superiors had good cause to praise his vigilance. He watched the town, kept guard over all its entrances at once, and wonderfully annoyed all new comers, so great was his fear of seeing a knife arrive with Dominique's arm behind it. In spite of all the signs of approval which he had received, he did not seek for opportunities of appearing before the police authorities; he was afraid of his superiors, of his comrades, and of himself. When he found himself in the presence of Monsignor Rouquette, private secretary of his eminence the Cardinal-vicar, he instinctively closed his jaws tight, for fear that his teeth should be heard to chatter.

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"I want you," said Rouquette. Cocomero's face expanded. "You are to set out this evening for Rome." Cocomero's face lengthened. "You are to go to the Via Frattina, No. 15; and to ask for Madame la Générale Fratief."

Cocomero fell on his knees; "Have mercy!" exclaimed he; "have mercy, Monsignor! I am, or at least I shall be, a poor father of a family! Do not ruin me; and I will serve you all my life long!"

"I do not want to ruin you; I mean to employ you. I know all."

Rouquette really knew nothing; but "*I know all*" is an almost infallible talisman, and there are very few men irreproachable enough to hear, without trembling, that awful "*I know all.*"

"And you think, Monsignor," stammered out Cocomero, "that there is no risk run in sending me to *that* house? Is not the Englishman of the gun still there?"

"Oho, we have it now," thought Rouquette.

He answered in a loud voice, "The Englishman of the gun is still there; but you are so changed that he will never find you out. And now, let us say a few words about the gun of the Englishman."

Cocomero clasped his hands piteously.

His improvised confessor went on, "Master Cocomero—for I know all your names—faithful domestic of Madame Fratief, people do not steal guns to go and shoot sparrows!"

"Not so loud, Monsignor, in Heaven's name! Menico had provoked me; he had twice beaten me black and blue,

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once in the courtyard of the Coromila palace, and then before the door of his masters, these good-for-nothing Feraldis. My patience was at an end; I asked God's pardon, I had four *neuvaines* said, and then — one has a hot temper, and a misfortune soon happens."

"This man is a positive treasure!" thought Rouquette. "He detests the Feraldis, he has already served La Fratief, he understands the duties of a spy, and he can fire a ball into a man's head at a hundred paces off. I will make his fortune."

He then went on to say in a loud, virtuous, and severe voice—

"You are a great criminal, but you can repair your crime. Choose between the honourable expiation that I propose, and the shameful penalties that the law suspends above your head. You will leave for Rome by this evening's conveyance. You will go to-morrow before eight to receive the orders of Madame Fratief; you will blindly execute whatever that admirable woman may command. You will have nothing to fear from justice so long as you shall be exact in fulfilling the new duties that the Holy Father's government lays upon you. If you believe yourself in danger of some private revenge, defend yourself, but without overlooking prudence. To meet your wants, you will every month receive a sum of seventy crowns from the steward of the Princes Coromila-Borghi. Here are your wages for the month, and two crowns for your journey. Go, and remember that you are in my power."

Cocomero, prostrated as if before a saint, caught hold

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of one of the flaps of Rouquette's coat, which he covered with the most affectionate kisses, and the most grateful tears. Rouquette rushed off to the boat laughing like a conjuror who has just seen a brother of the craft.

The passage was made direct, by a quick steamer, and did not occupy more than forty-eight hours. The sea was perfectly calm. Manuel was not sick, and Rouquette gave him two long French lessons without once speaking to him about the convent of St. Anthony. When they disembarked at the hotel, Lello got out from the very bottom of his trunk the portrait of Tolla. The dear little picture was almost ugly: the sea air having changed the colours on the voyage. He consoled himself as well as he could in scribbling off a long letter to his mistress. Neither his brother nor Rouquette asked him who he was writing to, but when he spoke of getting a barber to shave off his moustache, which had begun to grow again about the millionth part of an inch, they laughed at him so unmercifully that he gave in. His brother called the barber Tolla's executioner. Rouquette inquired how long noble Romans had been *taillables à merci?* They bought a pair of false moustaches, and had them placed on a cushion with the inscription, "*Offering to beauty.*" Rouquette sketched a woman decorated by a moustache, and wrote under it—*Tolla adorned with Lello's gifts.* The mantel-piece in his room happened to have a plaster Cupid on it; they put a razor between its hands, and wrote on the stand, "*Cruel child.*"

To obtain peace, Manuel put off the operation to better

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times; but he nobly confessed his fault in the very first letter he wrote to Tolla.

Their stay at Paris, where they remained till the 10th of June, did not at all cool Manuel's love. Paris has but commonplace seductions for a stranger who does not know French, and who is led about from morning to night by a hired *cicerone*, half servant, half dragoman. The Gobelins tapestries, the Place Vendôme column, the vaults of the Pantheon, and even the historical museum at Versailles, are as incapable of extinguishing passions as of kindling them. Manuel truly wrote that his eyes were at Paris, and his heart at Rome. When his brother pointed out to him, at the Champs Elysées, some exquisite summer attire or other, he answered candidly—

"Yes, that would become Tolla well."

Rouquette never met a pretty woman without drawing his attention towards her.

"I like Tolla better," he would reply; "in the first place, she is as handsome; secondly, she loves me; and lastly, she speaks Italian."

"Let us try fashionable life," said Rouquette. They delivered a dozen letters of introduction, which brought back five or six invitations to dinner. Manuel grew everywhere weary. His brother, who spoke French, and Rouquette, who was clever, completely eclipsed him. He consoled himself in thinking about Tolla. His mind was incessantly oscillating between the familiar window-seat and the parlour of St. Antoine. This great boy, who had never had two ideas in his head at once, was as pensive

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as a philosopher, and as absent as a mathematician, in consequence of which his travelling companions nicknamed him the *May-bug.*"

His chief and almost only thought during the three first weeks, was Tolla's silence. Every day his *valet-de-place* went to Jean-Jacques Rousseau Street, and returned empty-handed. At first, Manuel accused the Paris post-office, which seemed to him to be a frightful chaos; he not being able to understand how an administration which conveyed its officials about in omnibuses, should ever be able to distribute letters without losing one-half of them. His suspicions next fell upon his uncle, and upon the Roman post, which had never been to be trusted. At last he took to watching Rouquette and his brother, without, however, succeeding in finding them in fault. At the end of twenty-two days, his banker remitted to him a line from Tolla, which explained the whole mystery. She had written to him eleven times, neither more nor less, under the name of Manuel Miracolo, and those eleven letters were waiting at the post-office, in the division M, till Miracolo should come for them. Manuel ran off thither, followed by the interpreter, whom he had retained at ten francs per day. The clerk showed him eleven letters directed to Manuel Miracolo, and asked for his passport. Lello marvelled that in this land of liberty, a stranger should require his passport in order to obtain his correspondence. In Rome, where postmen do not go about in omnibuses, letters are made over to whoever likes to take them. If you appropriate the property of others, the

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administration charges the responsibility upon your conscience. Manuel showed a passport with the name of Coromila. He was accordingly sent off to another clerk, who presided over the letter C; but who had nothing for him. By dint of going from one wicket to another, he made out, his servant helping him, that an express order of the Director-General of the post-office would be requisite to restore to the letter C the treasures of love which the letter M had usurped from it. He mistrusted Rouquette too much to confide his difficulties to him, and ask his assistance. His inseparable interpreter conducted him to a lawyer, who explained to him how matters stood, and strongly recommended him to get the petition he drew up *viséd* by his ambassador. Manuel lost no time in repairing to the residence of the Apostolic nuncio, and let all the offices into the secret. Such zeal as this could not remain unrewarded; and at the end of ten days, his letters were delivered to him, by which time his brother, his uncle, Rouquette, Rome, and Paris, had learned their whole history.

Tolla was very sad. If her letters were not stained with tears, it was because her handkerchief had preserved her paper. Her retreat had not silenced her enemies. Some said that Manuel had placed her in the convent because he had a bad opinion of her mother, and would not leave her in the power of so intriguing a woman. Others would have it, that Manuel had had nothing to do with the affair, and that she had been shut up by order of the Pope, as a lost girl. A policeman, whose name no one

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knew, had publicly boasted of having taken a part in the execution of the measure. Copies were circulated of a letter from Monsignor Rouquette, where it was stated, in so many words, "You may assure the Feraldis that Manuel is not for them." To give additional force to this threat, Madame Fratief affirmed that Manuel had come to see her three hours before leaving Rome. It was all in vain for sensible people to declare that the fact was unlikely, as he had been seen setting out at five o'clock in the morning; the inhabitants of the Via Frattina declared that at two in the morning, some one in a layman's dress had roused up the whole neighbourhood, by knocking at No. 15. The life in the convent was not over-pleasant either; the nuns were kind, although rather curious; but the walls were very gray, the cell very narrow, and there was no garden! At first, Amarella bore the convent patiently; but, at the end of a few days, her temper had become soured. Madame Feraldi came every evening to the grating, with Victor and Menico. There was a parlour, too, for the servants and the lay-sisters; but no one had yet come there to see Amarella. The Count was overburdened with business, Philip was gone to fetch his mother from Florence, the Abbé la Marmora came twice a week. Tolla strongly recommended Manuel to attend the sacraments. "That is easily said," replied he; "but where is one to find priests in this heathen town? I have hardly met half a dozen of them in a month, and they were all French. I would willingly try to confess in French, little of it as I know;

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but how can I manage it? I find it impossible to speak French without laughing! I pray morning and evening, and postpone the sacraments till my return. · After all, the sacraments are only good at Rome!"

"Do you wish to know how my days are spent?" wrote Tolla. "I rise at nine o'clock; at ten, I attend mass, and remain in the church till twelve, praying God for thee; at twelve, I dine with the nuns; at a quarter to one they ring the bell of silence, and every one is obliged to go and sleep in her own room; at three o'clock the interval of silence is over, and the nuns descend to the choir. I do not rise quite so soon, and I sit down to write till they come to take me down for devotional reading, and the telling our beads, which is done in a large room, where all are assembled working; at six o'clock I go to the grating to see my mother, and the persons she brings with her. After their departure I go up again to my room, or I walk upon a terrace that is near it; I stay there while the sisters are at matins—that is to say, about an hour after the *Ave Maria*. I then go down to the church, where I pray, all alone, for a good quarter of an hour, and then I go and have supper in my own room. At nine o'clock they again ring the bell of silence, everybody goes to bed, and not a breath is to be heard throughout the house. I shut myself up with Amarella, who sleeps in a closet near me, and we occupy ourselves till midnight—she with working, I with reading. We perform our *neuvaines* and our other devotions; then I go to bed, and, till sleep visits me, I think of gardens, forests, of

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beautiful flowers and tall trees, of horses, balls, music, love, life—for I do not live here." "As for me," wrote Lello in reply, "I get up at ten o'clock—a little late this. I breakfast at eleven; at twelve, I go out sight-seeing; at five, I dine; then off to the theatre; and, after the theatre, a little walk on the Boulevard des Italiens, where one sees multitudes of handsome girls, dressed in the height of the fashion! But it is a horrid spectacle, and only inspires disgust."

One must be familar with Roman morals and ideas, in order to understand all that this last touch of Lello's description added to Tolla's anxieties. Rome is not an innocent city, far from it; but it is outwardly decorous, the police never suffering anything scandalous. Never does a young man meet there with those temptations which swarm in the streets of Paris. Dissipation is veiled, and vice puts on a garb of discretion. Tolla was more amazed than a Parisian lady would be, if the morality of the Marquesas were described to her. Her chaste, but lively imagination, pictured the Boulevard des Italiens as the very gate of hell—a theatre lit up by flames, on which was represented, day and night, the great mystery of the temptation of St. Anthony!

However, Manuel never went to bed without kissing the pale miniature of his dear Tolla.

At the period of their departure for London, matters had not advanced a single step. Manuel was fortifying himself in his love, and Tolla in her retreat. Madame Fratief was at the last gasp; but going to make an

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attempt upon Amarella to satisfy her conscience. Rouquette did not know what further measures to employ; he plainly saw that the foggy delights of London, and the august rejoicings at the time of the Coronation, would produce no more effect than the seductions of Paris. All his resources being thus exhausted, he tried to regain Manuel's confidence. He left off joking about Tolla; he even manifested a degree of respect for so great an example of constancy as hers. He let it be understood that, if he had no sympathy for the light affections and the romances of a day, which are the delight of school-boys and the despair of families, he knew at least how to admire the heroism of an enduring attachment. By the same inspiration, the Colonel wrote two long letters in succession to Lello. The Colossus adopted a gentle tone; he reproached Manuel with his want of confidence, and knocked timidly at the door of his heart, hoping thus to be admitted. Without going beyond the commonplaces of a family correspondence, he boasted of his fatherly indulgence; said that nothing could make him forget that he had dandled the little Lello on his knee. It was for his sake, far more than for his brother's, that he had renounced the amenities of marriage, and borne the privations of a bachelor's existence. He had always intended to leave him all his fortune—witness the fact that his will was already made and sealed. Why, then, did the object of so marked a predilection show so little gratitude? No one exacted from him any sacrifice, all that was asked was sincerity.

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This somewhat vague text was cleverly commented on by Rouquette. "You are wrong," said he, "to have any secrets from your uncle; he is a man from whom you have everything to hope, and nothing to fear. Were I in your place, I should openly tell him the whole story, since he already knows it; and I should ask him for his consent, unless I meant to dispense with it."

"Would he grant it me, my dear Rouquette?"

"Why not? And yet, between ourselves, I do think that the convent of St. Antoine weighs upon him. They say at Rome that you have shut up Mademoiselle Feraldi, to protect her against your uncle. What an insult to a poor man, who loves you and means to make you his heir! What can you expect him to think, when he sees that you actually prefer martyrizing your mistress, to leaving her quietly in the same town with him?"

"It is true, my good Rouquette, Tolla does suffer martyrdom."

"You know it, then! You have heard of all the hardships that she undergoes in that horrible convent?"

"She has written to me about some of them."

"And has she spoken to you of her health?"

"What! is she ill?"

"Has she told you that *ennui* wore her to the bone? that fever"....

"Speak, Rouquette, in Heaven's name! keep back from me nothing that you know."

"They say that she does not sleep; that a slow fever is consuming her; that she is frightfully thin; that

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her fine eyes are growing hollow, her complexion fading; and that she is scarcely to be recognised. Her maid can no longer endure the discipline of the convent, and threatens to leave her. What will become of her alone with her sorrow?"

"Not another word, my friend! I should abhor myself too much. I have played, without knowing it, the part of an executioner; but do not think that I have placed her at St. Antoine because I distrusted my uncle. I had other reasons: I feared that the friendship of a certain young man might take advantage of my absence to metamorphose itself into love."

"What an idea, my dear Lello! Has nature then made you to be supplanted by any one?"

"No, but"....

"Besides, I will answer for it—I who am knowing about women—that that one is incapable of betraying you. You know whether I look at her partially or not: you have always heard me pass my opinion upon her very freely—too freely, perhaps; for I am only now beginning to appreciate her virtues. Well then! take my word for it, Tolla will never betray you."

Manuel wrote to tell Tolla that he permitted her to leave the convent, if she still continued to feel so unwell there. Before long, he begged of her to return to her parents. Under the dictation of Rouquette, a simple request soon changed into a strong desire, and next into an *amoroso comando*. Finally, he declared that the idea of his mistress in that cursed convent, reduced him to

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despair. "If thou wert to persist in remaining there," said he, "thou wouldst occasion me so much mental distress, that my physical powers would sink under it."

Nevertheless, Tolla persisted.

"I have already endured too much," replied she, "not to persevere to the end. If I were to obey thee, I should endanger the result of all my sufferings. Ask of me what thou wilt, except the sacrifice of our future; thou wilt find me submissive to thy will, and even to thy caprices.

"But what can induce thee to wish me to leave this place? This idea is not thine own! Wilt thou know its real character? Ask thyself whether those who have inspired thee with it desire our union or seek to prevent it? Thou knowest whither all their efforts tend. Shall we then go and render their success easy by following their counsels? Is it in our interest that they are now speaking, or in their own? After having done all in our power to deprive them of any weapons against us, wouldst thou have me furnish them with such by a change of conduct?

"My parents approve my perseverance; the Marchioness Trasimeni implores me to go on; Doctor Ely has told me that I am admired by the most honourable families in Rome; the Abbé La Marmora vows that I am lost if I cross the threshold; the Abbé Fortunati, who never in his whole life said a positive yes or no, owns that the idea of entering the convent was heaven-inspired. Therefore I remain here. I have sworn it, and I, for my

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part, will keep my promises; only thy hand or that of death can tear me hence."

During these discussions, Manuel's brother married a rather pretty Englishwoman, with a really beautiful fortune. Manuel acknowledged at once that, fortune apart, his sister-in-law would not bear a comparison with Tolla. It was in the following week that the House of Peers put on its ermined red velvet robes, to assist at the coronation of the Queen—one of the most imposing spectacles of this century. Manuel, lost in the ranks of the Neapolitan embassy, saw the whole of the ceremony. He put on his celebrated court dress at five in the morning, and only took it off at three hours after midnight. He would have died of hunger in the interim, had he not taken the precaution of bringing some cakes in his pocket. This memorable day, and the beautiful pageant before him, did not in any way tend to make him forget Tolla. Quite the contrary. Did not he hear all around him, "Long live Victoria?" Was not the name of Victoria shining out in characters of fire amidst all the illuminations? The day after the coronation, more in love than ever, he wrote, under Rouquette's dictation, a letter of four pages to the Colonel, all full of avowals and prayers. When he had sealed up the envelope, Rouquette bestowed on him a paternal embrace: "Bravo!" said he, "you act like a good nephew and a sensible man. That little letter is big with many millions. You will be as rich as your brother."

"And now, my dear Rouquette, I am going to wait for

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my uncle's answer at Paris. London wearies me: I do not understand the signs of the shops, and I do not find the English polite."

Manuel had not understood the stately politeness of the English any better than the signs of the shops.

"By my faith!" said Rouquette, "for a mere nothing I might be tempted to go to Paris with you. Your brother is in his honey-moon, and he looks down upon the whole human race, as do the inhabitants of all moons. He can dispense with me as easily as a partridge can with a sportsman's gun. Let us go to Paris! we will continue our French lessons there."

On the 8th of July, they installed themselves the second time in the Hotel Meurice. Rouquette, to be still more unshackled, dropped the *Monsignor*, and wrote on his visiting-cards, "The Count de Rouquette." Manuel, who had not understood English cookery any more than he had English manners, was enchanted to meet again with the hotel dinners and café breakfasts. He went to the theatre every night, to learn the language. Rouquette was only sorry that he could not take him there twice a day. He lived in hopes that Tolla would yet be dethroned by a singer or an actress, and he knew, from experience, that theatre-attachments have more influence over men than any others, because, in their case, vanity seconds love. But unfortunately, in the month of July, the Italian company was travelling, and the opera-house in process of restoration. At the Comédie-Française, too, all the best actors were enjoying their holidays.

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Manuel was therefore reduced to the melodrama and the *vaudeville*. He had a weakness for the *vaudeville*, though he seldom caught the point of the joke when first spoken: he laughed when all others had done, and his mirth lagged a few minutes behind that of the pit. Sometimes even he digested a *bon mot* till the following day, and surprised Rouquette by a homeric laugh, which exploded like a fusee in the middle of their breakfast.

Three days after their arrival, the two inseparables had betaken themselves to the Folies-Dramatiques. Manuel, from the stage-box, was engaged very attentively in spying a young fair-haired and fair-complexioned actress, who figured in the play-bill under the name of Cornélie, and whom the author had honoured with a part of thirty-five lines. He took advantage of the first interval to question the box-keeper, and he learned, to his great astonishment, that Mademoiselle Cornélie Sarrazin was a most respectable young person. She lived under her father's roof, only went out with her mother, and showed with pride two little hands as red as peonies; for the rest, a good girl; her heart had never yet spoken, but there was nothing to indicate that it had been born deaf and dumb. This novelty stimulated Manuel's curiosity, and he was sorry that the box-keeper had not told him more in return for his five francs. Fortunately, Mademoiselle Cornélie, who only played in the first piece, washed off her white and red paint in haste, and went to seat herself in the gallery with her mother. Manuel longed to go and look alone at this specimen of paradoxical vir-

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tue, and that mother of provisional severity. His amiable companion led him thither. Rouquette, like a man who has long frequented the theatre, and is well up in the repertory, opened the conversation by a compliment, and a bag of iced raisins. The bonbons made the compliment acceptable; the dress of the two friends made the bonbons acceptable;—the bonbons of a poet may indeed be sometimes refused, but those of a millionnaire never. Madame Sarrazin appreciated, at the first glance, the gorgeous jewellery with which Manuel was decked. The mothers of actresses are they who, after the jewellers, best understand jewellery. She did not ask him whether he was a Parisian; no one but a stranger would ever have dreamed of coming, in the month of July, decked out like a shrine, to the stage-box of the Folies. Rouquette presented his friend, after having first introduced himself, and all this was done in the twinkling of an eye;—one is never shy with those who have themselves no shyness. He took good care not to leave Manuel to entertain Mademoiselle Cornélie; he pretended to be working for his own advantage, and was the first to enter the lists that Manuel might have the pleasure of distancing him. As chance would have it, the pretty blonde could speak a little Italian; she had learned it during her first year at the Conservatoire, when she hoped to have a voice; and knew about as much of it as Lello did of French. Lello was delighted to find a woman capable of understanding him; it appeared to him that he was again in Italy. After the play was over, Madame Sarrazin allowed herself to be escorted to her

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own door; her residence being a fourth floor at the entrance of the Faubourg St. Denis. On their way, they all partook of ices before the Café de l'Ambigu.

As they returned to the hotel, Manuel turned into ridicule those virtuous ladies of the theatre who deign to seat themselves before the door of a café, and between two strangers. Rouquette defended Cornélie; maintaining that those easy manners and that apparent facility went for nothing, and that a girl might be very good-natured without being ill-conducted. In short, he bet upon her virtue, Manuel against it, and at four o'clock the following day they mounted Madame Sarrazin's staircase. Manuel had bought a bouquet at Madame Prévost's; of which he repented himself on entering the sitting-room. The mother was darning one stocking, the daughter was knitting another; M. Sarrazin was furbishing up a gigantic walking-stick—he was drum-major in the National Guard. The yellow Utrecht velvet furniture savoured of virtue to the utmost. "My flowers are ridiculous," thought Lello; "if I had known, I should have brought girkins with me." He examined, with a sort of stupefaction, the lithographs on the wall. They were quite a gallery of coloured prints, representing *Mélanie*, *Victorine*, *Henriette*, *Julie*, the *Bridegroom* and the *Bride*. The bridegroom is the gentleman that every peasant would like to resemble; with rings on every finger, and a thick chain around his neck. He looks about him with an amiable smile, and holds a nosegay in one hand, and a box of bonbons in the other. "Here am I!" said poor

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Lello, sadly. Under the picture he reads *The Bridegroom*, —*Lo Sposo*, in Italian. Evidently this lithograph is a personal joke. *Victorine*, that a malicious chance had hung up beside the Bridegroom, is a girl with eyes larger than her mouth, a pot of flowers in her right hand, a fan in her left; the prodigality of the artist has drawn a rose on the back of her hand. A poet, whom the world has never known, has written below the picture the following distich, that Manuel read, not without confusion :—

"If you constant are in love,
You will always happy prove."

While he was given up to this investigation, he heard Madame Sarrazin talking about furniture with Rouquette, and saying, "My daughter is economizing in order to buy a wardrobe with mirrored sides, because it is a genteel piece of furniture." "Good!" said he to himself; "I will send the wardrobe, with mirrored sides, and I will not come here again."

Just then a few visitors chanced to drop in. First of all, a friend of Cornélie's, more advanced than she in the science of life, for she had an Indian shawl on; then a young painter, with a turned-down collar; then an auditor of the State Council, in a pair of new gloves; then a young journalist; then a *vaudeville* writer, who was beginning to get his works played; then a nice-looking under-clerk of the Minister of the Interior; and finally, a young leading actor at *La Gaieté*. These six young fellows were content to share, for the present, the good graces of Cornélie. The young actor was an old

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fellow-pupil at the Conservatoire; the journalist *patronized* her in his articles; the clerk bestowed his political protection upon her; the painter was going to take her portrait for the next exhibition; the auditor, without being very rich, had parents sufficiently generous to allow of his being occasionally appealed to for a loan of five louis; the *vaudeville* writer was finishing for her a piece in three acts, intended to bring out all the perfections of her little person. In the first act, she was to be a peasant, and to show her legs; in the second, as a marchioness, she was to display her shoulders; in the third, she threw away her cap to the wind, and showed her fine hair. Cornélie manifested an impartial gratitude to all her friends. Not one of them was preferred above the others—so none were jealous; and these rivals, who did not even bow to each other in the street, dwelt in harmony at her house. It was there that Manuel heard, for the first time, the true Parisian conversation—lively, brisk, made up of behind-the-scenes topics, of anecdotes of good society, and of painters' commissions—sprinkled with puns, spangled with witticisms, and seasoned with scandal, at which no one was scandalized. He was perfectly amazed at this joust, this tournament of wit, these lances shivered, and this little feast of courtesy, given by six knights in frock-coats, to a queen of love in a dressing-gown. He began to understand what his uncle had said about the seductions of Paris, and he promised himself not to return to Rome before having supped in such strange company.

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He soon had this pleasure. Two days later, Madame Sarrazin, who had received an anonymous present of a wardrobe with mirrors, invited all her friends to a picnic. The clerk sent a salmon; the journalist, a pie; the actor, a bushel of crabs; the dramatic author, a Parthenon, in pine-apple ice; the painter, some fireworks which they would have set off in the sitting-room, if the landlord had permitted it; the auditor furnished the truffles; Rouquette, the wine; and Manuel, the plate. Three or four female friends of the fair Cornélie's, honoured this family festival with their presence. M. Sarrazin presided over it like a true drum-major, with the quaint dignity which belongs only to that profession. Manuel intoxicated himself with the wine of Rouquette; and, above all, with the glances of Mademoiselle Cornélie. As soon as the table was removed, they danced as long as the piano had any strings left. Before they separated, all the guests were appointed to meet again on the next day but one; they were then to go to Versailles to see the *grandes eaux* play, and to dine at the Hotel des Réservoirs. "When I think," said Manuel to himself, "that I was very near leaving France, without making acquaintance with the Hotel des Réservoirs, and seeing the *grandes eaux* play!"

He was just putting on a pair of white trowsers to go to Versailles, when his *valet-de-place*, who no longer accompanied him in his excursions, brought him the following letter:—

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"The Convent of St. Antoine, Rome, *July* 5, 1838.

"Where are you, Lello? Where are your promises, your love, and my hopes? As for me, I am still in the convent, in the same cell, and the same sorrow. Do you know how long it is since you have written to me? Your letters have been my only consolation. May God forgive you the harm you do me, and preserve you from ever suffering as much as I do! I dare not depict to you the state of my mind: I should poison all your pleasures. I do not speak to you about my health; you will understand that my heart is too sick for the body to be strong. I had summoned up courage for two months; but it is more than two months since you left, and my stock is exhausted. My friend, remember from time to time, as you run from one pleasure to another, that you have loved me for a few days, and that I shall adore you all my life. "Tolla."

"Are you coming?" cried Rouquette, through the door. "The carriage is ready; we must not keep the ladies waiting."

"I am coming, my dear fellow, as quick as I can. Just give me five minutes, I have a little matter to get through."

Accordingly he wrote:—

"Paris, *July* 16, 1838.

"My dear Tolla,—Thou knowest my heart very ill, if thou supposest that it is the love of frivolous pleasures which has torn me from thee, and which still retains me

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in this land of exile. Know, that the secret object of my journey has been to obtain my uncle's consent. One can ask in a letter what one would not dare to solicit *vivâ voce*. Thou wilt perfectly remember that I have always wished that our happiness should receive the sanction of my family; and thou art too affectionate a daughter thyself to blame so delicate a sentiment as this. We ought not, in order to satisfy our own fancies, to declare war against our relatives.

"After an affectionate letter from my uncle, whose tender reproaches tore my heart, I made up my mind to bring the question to an issue. In fact, our situation was becoming too painful—to love each other, and appear like strangers! Besides, it gave the ill-natured too great a handle against us.

"Thou wilt understand how much I at once desire and dread my uncle's answer. May God be pleased to touch his heart, and to render him propitious towards us! Nothing would then be wanting to our felicity. If his answer be not what we desire, we must try every possible means of changing his decision. I shall not return to Rome before the question is settled. Meanwhile, I suffer martyrdom; suspense kills me,—pity me!"

Rouquette knocked at the door. "Ten minutes since the five minutes are over!"

"One other second, my good friend. I am in as great a hurry as you are."

He continued:—

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"It is now, my Tolla, that we must redouble our prayers, and place all our hopes in God. If He has decreed that we shall be happy, He will know how to soften my uncle's heart. Let us bow to that Holy Virgin, who so loves to console the afflicted; who knows whether she may not do something for us? I importune with my petitions, not only St. Joseph, as thou recommendest me, but all the other saints of paradise. I wish that they were still more numerous, that we might have more advocates with the Supreme Judge. Finally, let us throw ourselves into the arms of Providence, and hope!—I love thee. "LELLO."

"Yes, I love her!" said Manuel, lighting a taper to seal his letter, "and there is really some merit in keeping my love intact, in the midst of the pleasures of Paris. She fears, poor child, that I am forgetting her! But I thought of her twenty times during that infernal supper! Nothing will triumph over my passion, because my passion is myself, and I am stronger than all. Yet there are poor fellows who can be made to forget their mistress by a bottle of champagne, or the smile of a pretty girl! My love is like the salamander—it can go through fire without getting its wings burnt!"

The excursion to Versailles was followed by many more. Madame Sarrazin found out that Manuel knew very little of Paris and its environs; she lionized him therefore. A good sort of woman was Madame Sarrazin, much liked at the theatre and in her district, and devoted,

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in an unprejudiced way, to her daughter's happiness. She had always said to Cornélie, "My child, maternal authority has its limits; and I have not the ridiculous notion that I can keep you under my finger and thumb till the age of thirty. Besides, if I wished it, the law would not allow it. Try, then, to provide for yourself. If you find a rich husband, I shall be very glad of it; he will make me an allowance. Unfortunately, the Folies-Dramatiques have not much turn for marriages, and we have not seen many there this year. With the fortune that I give thee —talents and beauty, to wit—it is rare to be able definitively to marry. If indeed you had been at the opera! The Emperor of Russia, every year, pays two or three great lords for marrying dancers. But as you are at the Folies, you must take your measures accordingly. As for me, if I ever see you in love with a man who is young, rich, and well brought up, I shall begin by giving you good moral advice (if I bore you, you will not listen to me); then I shall go to the gentleman, I shall tell him all the sacrifices that I have made for your education; and, if he has a good heart, he will leave me my daughter, or at least he will reimburse me."

On the 8th of August 1838, about three weeks after the excursion to Versailles, Manuel learned most positively that Madame Sarrazin had spent on the education of her daughter, twenty thousand francs and a few centimes. The fall of Mademoiselle Cornélie made no more noise than that of an apple. And what was equally remarkable, not one of the six adorers of the pretty blonde seemed to owe

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Manuel any grudge. He even fancied that they pressed his hand gratefully. He never knew how many had been made happy by his happiness, Rouquette amongst the rest.

M. Sarrazin retained his habit of always walking with his head erect, except when he passed under the Porte St. Denis.

Rouquette chose the very day that Cornélie was installed in an apartment of six thousand francs, to send Manuel his uncle's answer. He had had it in his portfolio for a whole week past.

Manuel hesitated a moment before he broke the seal. Evidently the letter contained a *yes* or a *no*. A *no* closed to him the paradise of marriage; a *yes* drove him away from the terrestrial paradise he had just been furnishing so expensively. A *no* separated him from Tolla; a *yes* tore him away from Cornélie. Yet we are bound to admit to his credit, that his final wish was for a *yes*.

The letter said *no*. The Colonel had not used any circumlocutions. He wrote to his nephew, "I permit all follies, save one. Throw thy money out of the window, I will give thee more; but do not throw thy name—we have no other. I have often told thee that I could refuse thee nothing, and I repeat it again. Wilt thou have a million? But if you are looking for a rope to hang yourself, I do not sell such. Note well that you may marry if you will without my consent; therefore it is not my permission that you are asking, but my advice. Now the devil himself could not constrain me to give you bad

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counsel. Do what you like; you are absolute master of your actions, as I am of my money. I do not forbid you to marry the girl who has chosen you, and who has been courting you for a year past; but I warn you, that if you persist, you need not trouble yourself to write to me. I shall not answer. With that I embrace thee. Must I add, *for the last time?*"

"What a devil of a man!" said Lello. "He speaks out as boldly as though he were right! I shall not enjoy my supper to-night, Rouquette!"

Rouquette was never far off. He glanced over the letter, and found that it agreed admirably with the rough sketch he had sent the Colonel. "Well then?" asked he.

"It is my place to say to you, 'Well then?'"

"Well then, your uncle is wrong. He does less than justice to the virtues of Mademoiselle Feraldi."

"Is it not so, Rouquette? So much virtue, beauty, nobility"—

"I will not speak about her nobility; I have been assured that the genealogy of Doctor Feraldi is somewhat defective. As to beauty, she has had as much as any woman in the world; now, however, we do not know how much of it remains. I shall pass lightly over the financial part of the matter. She brings you for her fortune a vineyard worth two hundred thousand francs; that is a pretty penny. And further, she secures by contract to the Prince your brother, an inheritance of four or five millions—that is to say, all the fortune of the

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Colonel! But she has so many virtues. To be sure, virtues are rather at a discount just now, as you ought to know; you have just bought one."

"Sorry jester!... Rouquette, you ought to intercede with my uncle!"

"Much obliged! I consider that I have enemies enough already."

"Then make me a rough sketch of a letter."

"To tell him that you submit?"

"No, to explain to him that I cannot submit."

"What would be the use of it? He would throw my composition into the fire at the very first line."

"And yet he ought to know that my honour is pledged to the Count Feraldi."

"Stay a moment, an idea strikes me! Beg M. Feraldi to relate the whole affair to him. He is the one most interested in the marriage being concluded, for you will own that he is the gainer by it rather than you. And besides, is he not an advocate? He will not refuse to plead his own cause. Shall I make you a rough sketch of a letter to the Count?"

"Do so, my friend; I have never written to him, and I should not know how to set about it."

And Manuel walked up and down the room, while Rouquette wrote as follows:—

"PARIS, *August* 11, 1838.

"VERY DEAR COUNT,—I have never before taken the liberty of writing to you, knowing how much your profession occupies you, and how precious the time of men of

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business is; but a painful necessity now compels me to inflict upon you the trouble of reading what I have to say.

"Since my departure from Rome, my only anxiety has been to induce my relations to approve of my marriage to your daughter. After two months' hesitation, I armed myself with courage, and wrote to my uncle. I confessed all to him, I informed him of the strength of my attachment, and the long duration of our engagement; I depicted to him the virtues which constitute Victoria's best wealth, I described with scrupulous exactness the state of our feelings, and I implored my uncle not to separate two hearts so closely united. I had to wait long for his answer; but would to God that it had never come at all! Not only does my uncle formally refuse my request, but he declares, in conclusion, that he embraces me for the last time.

"You may imagine my sufferings in the midst of this conflict of affections. I would not willingly give up my happiness, but yet duty commands me to respect the wishes of my family. I would, if I could, subdue my passions; but when I think of the virtues of the angel that I adore, my strength fails me.

"In this state of cruel perplexity, I turn towards you, and I place our destiny in your hands. Since fate condemns me either to obtain this consent or to make the terrible sacrifice, I come to pray you most fervently to plead my cause with my uncle, and to obtain for me, by your amicable intervention, what I have had the sorrow

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of hearing refused to me. If, by a misfortune that I dare not anticipate, your prayers were to fail like mine, believe me, sir, that the reputation of your daughter is too dear to me to allow me to continue the intimate relations that formerly existed between us; but I shall ever retain for her, and for the whole of your family, an eternal esteem.

"I feel it a duty to declare to you that I have only admitted my brother and my uncle into the secret. All has been kept close, and thus the young girl's honour has been scrupulously respected. I hope that my resolution will be approved by you and by your virtuous daughter, to whom I authorize you to show this letter. I beg you to present my compliments, and I am, for life, your very affectionate friend and servant,

"MANUEL COROMILA-BORGHI."

When Manuel had copied this letter, Rouquette asked for his rough sketch under pretext of burning it. But he put it into an envelope, and sent it off to Madame Fratief.

Later, Lello wrote to Tolla a touching letter:

"My heart bleeds," said he. "O God! what a cruel sentence! On one side, passion that consumes, on the other, duty that tortures me. I hear thy voice crying to me, 'Do thy duty at whatever cost it may be; duty is God's law.' Yes, my Tolla, thou art sufficiently virtuous to speak thus to me. Thou lovest thy parents; thou knowest that it is impossible to refuse anything to those

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dear and reverend beings who have held us on their knees when we were yet infants: thou wilt approve the resolution that I have formed. If thou listenest to the world, it will perhaps blame me; if thou allowest thy conscience to speak, it will justify me.

"One hope remains to us. I have written to thy father; I have implored him to exert himself on our behalf with my uncle: perhaps he may have some success. If this last chance escapes us, alas! I am forced to forget thee! Shall I be able to do so? God, who exacts from us the sacrifice, will give us strength to accomplish it; but should my heart be obliged to withdraw its tender feelings from thee, never will it forget the image of an angel adorned by so many fine qualities; and thou wilt have an eternal place in the esteem of thy very affectionate friend, "LELLO."

"*P. S.*—Our happiness will depend upon thy father's answer."

Manuel then got into a carriage with Rouquette, took his letters to the general post-office, and drove next to his mistress's new apartments. The arrival of the two friends interrupted the young painter, who was sketching a little portrait of Cornélie.

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CHAPTER IX.

Amarella had not entered the convent for the pleasure of praying to God, or of accompanying her mistress: on the contrary, she thought that people could pray equally well everywhere, and her devotion to Tolla did not amount to self-abnegation. She had, like all stirring characters, a horror of captivity; she was fond of fresh air, like all who are born in the country; and she enjoyed displaying her charms, as all women do. Add to which, that, in common with the Romans of both sexes, she had a passion for the lottery. The lottery is a legal amusement—a game played between the Holy Father and his subjects: the players sometimes win at it, the Government always. Amarella did as do all the servants, hirelings, beggars, and mendicant friars, in the capital of the Christian world: she put by elevenpence a week, that she might be entitled to take a ticket, to dream of three numbers, and to wait, comfortably seated in a castle in the air, for the Thursday-drawing and the ruin of her hopes. Now, in entering the convent of St. Antoine, she had renounced the lottery, fresh air, liberty, and the admiration of young

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men; and all this to please Menico. Menico had said to her, taking her by the waist as he spoke, "If you were a good girl, you would go and keep Mademoiselle company. Are you afraid of being dull? I can promise you that you will receive visits: the parlour is not made for dogs. Are you afraid that all the young fellows will get married in your absence, and that not one will be left for you? Have no fear: I know one who will wait patiently, and who will take a vow, if you like, not even to look at a woman till you return." Now, these rather too jesuitical promises, seconded by some caresses, had deceived the subtle Amarella. She sacrificed three months of liberty with the blind confidence of a gambler who stakes his only coat upon the card he fancies a good one. The Menico whom she had so long pursued, was something more in her eyes than a mere man: he was the lucky card she had been cherishing during two years.

When the gates of the convent closed upon her, and she saw Dominique weeping side by side with Lello, she felt some sympathy for her mistress rise in her heart: a similarity of age, of sorrow, and of hope, united her to Tolla; and she was even very near making her the confidant of her love. A fortnight passed without her receiving a visit from Dominique: she fancied that he was detained at the Feraldi palace by a slight indisposition, or by the sedentary nature of his functions. She waited a second fortnight, arming herself with a sullen patience. "Perhaps he wishes to prove me," thought she. But when, through Tolla's innocent indiscretion,

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she learned that Dominique came daily to the convent with the Countess, when she was obliged to own to herself that she had been duped by him, she was seized with a fearful enmity, not against him, but against Tolla. Jealousy led her to see a rival in her mistress; she suspected her of having employed an unworthy coquetry to steal a plebeian heart of which she could make no use: she called to mind the innocent avowals of Menico on the road to Lariccia, the tears of Tolla when he was supposed dead, and the famous kiss that she had given him on the day of the Assumption: she was too blinded by disappointment to see that the imaginary love of Dominique was a religious adoration, and that Tolla was no more aware of it than the painted and gilded madonnas in churches are conscious of the prayers murmured at their feet. In her first angry impulse, she ran to her room and packed up her things, determined to abandon Tolla to her sorrow; but afterwards she thought better of it, put everything back in its proper place, and went down again, smiling at another plan of revenge.

From that day she began to wage an underhand war against her mistress. "Only wait," said she, "I will make a very pin-cushion of thy heart!" When Tolla had had some good news, Amarella ran in haste to share her joy; but never without distilling a drop of poison into it. "He loves you," she would say; "he will give the world a great example of constancy. Who would have thought it? Mademoiselle sees now that he is better than his reputation. I knew very well, I did, that he

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would not betray you like the others." If Tolla was sad—if the poor soul, by dint of peering into the future, had found some fresh cause for despair, Amarella put on an expression of careless gaiety; she stunned the whole house by her loud metallic laughter; she came to sit by her mistress, and to draw for her a charming picture of the happiness she no longer hoped for. "Why do you fret, Mademoiselle? There's a good time coming! Who knows if, in two months, you will not enter the church, dressed like a queen, in a white velvet robe with pearl buttons, and a crown of orange blossoms in your hair! In a year's time we shall have to baptize a handsome little Lello, as red as a crab—I fancy I already hear him cry. In twenty months he will be as white as milk, as fresh as a rose, and as firm as an apple. His teeth will come in pairs; he will begin to hold things in his little fat hands, he will try to speak, and to say a great deal, but he will only be able to bring out *mamma* and *babbo;* he will struggle to run, but he will not know how to put one leg before the other, and he will entangle his two little feet, as if he had five or six of them. You will kneel by him on the carpet, and you will hold him up by his sash. . . . You weep, Mademoiselle? Foolish creature that I am! I have given you pain. I was forgetting that, if M. Coromila forsakes you, you have made a vow to enter the convent, and to renounce the happiness of being a mother. Come now, Mademoiselle, do not fret, it will not be so. Perhaps you are not quite forsaken, after all? Would you like me to sing you a pretty song?

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Io ti voglio ben assai,
Ma tu "..

"Be silent! be silent!" cried Tolla, bursting out into sobs.

"Hush! my dear young lady, the nuns will hear you! You have sworn to keep your love to yourself."

Tolla forced back her tears, and stifled herself with her handkerchief, to prevent herself screaming. She kept all her promises, and, but for the intentional babbling of Amarella, no one in the convent would have guessed at her sorrow. The nuns of St. Antoine were for the most part young, some of them were under twenty. They scrupulously observed the rule of their order, and especially their vow of obedience; they could not even change their dress, or leave a mouthful of their dinner on their plate, without asking permission to do so. Separated from the world, without having ever known it, they contented themselves with the monotony of conventual customs, and believed themselves happy, because they were resigned. Tolla envied their tranquillity of soul, just as the living sometimes envy the dead. She respected their ignorance, concealed her love, tried to laugh when she was saddest, and to eat when her heart was heaviest, else the whole table would have wished to know why she had no appetite. Amarella took pleasure in admitting the whole convent into Tolla's secrets, not doubting that the scandal of the disclosure would all fall upon Tolla's head. But the result did not answer her expectation; the sisters had only pity and tenderness for

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the pale victim of a disease to which they were strangers. Perhaps some of the youngest among them may have, in their turn, envied the sufferings of their beautiful inmate; but young and old were unanimous in their discretion, and afforded a rare instance of a religious community possessing a secret without discussing it.

On the 23d of August, after three months of voluntary captivity, spent without a single visit from Dominique, Amarella had exhausted all the resources of hate, and knew no longer to what demon to dedicate herself. On being told that a man was waiting for her in the parlour, she ran thither, wondering what fit of remorse could have brought her back Dominique; but it was not Dominique who had sent for her—it was a large, light-haired man, well shaved, well curled, well fed, very florid, and with quite a paternal aspect. This worthy personage, whom she knew to be a Neapolitan from his accent, informed her that her beautiful conduct, and her evangelical devotion, had made a deep impression on the heart of a very noble and very rich stranger; that that lady, a Russian by birth, but of the Catholic religion, wished, at whatever cost, to enlist her into her service, and was ready to double her wages, if necessary. Amarella, divided between the fear of giving up her revenge and the desire to regain her liberty, asked for a few days' deliberation. She alleged that the Feraldi family had promised her a fortune of a hundred crowns, if she remained with Mademoiselle.

"Do not let that weigh with you," replied the un-

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known. "The person who sends me is as generous, to say the least of it, as your Feraldis. Make up your mind as quickly as you can; I shall come back to-morrow."

That same day Count Feraldi received the two letters of Manuel, dated the 11th of August. After having read his, he did not hesitate to open the one that bore Tolla's address. The Countess listened to its perusal with a dull and tearless eye; she felt as if hearing her daughter's sentence of death. Victor sat there, clenching his fists and biting his lips. This state of consternation was changed into fury, when in came Doctor Ely, the Abbé Fortunati, and Philip Trasimeni—all of them having received, they knew not whence, a fac-simile of the letter to the Count. A copy of this very letter had even been placarded on the door of the Feraldi palace, and Menico, who had torn it down, had brought it in weeping.

The parents and friends of Tolla now held a tumultuous council; Menico swore that he would be the death of the colonel and all his household; Philip and Victor wanted to set out that very evening for Paris; the doctor went on declaring that the reading of those letters would kill Tolla on the spot; the Countess offered to go and throw herself at the feet of old Coromila; the abbé spoke of appealing to the Pope; the Count had lost all self-possession, and did not know which of them to listen to. He walked to and fro, sat down for a few moments, then started up suddenly, crushing Manuel's two letters in his hand, and mechanically repeating the postscript of

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the second: *Our happiness will depend upon thy father's reply!* All was disorder, contradiction, wretchedness; every one speaking at random without listening to themselves or to others. In the midst of the general confusion, Menico took upon himself to go for the Count's uncle, the Cardinal Pezzato. The entrance of that fine old man with his white hairs appeased the whole party, and composed in some measure the most excited minds. The young men were silent at once, and all violent schemes were hushed by the presence of the venerable octogenarian, who had been the minister of Pius VII., and Leo XII. The cardinal desired the two letters to be read to him by Victor Feraldi, whose voice shook with rage. He at once declared that Manuel's request was absurd, that the Count could not with any propriety ask the colonel for his nephew's hand; but that as young Coromila had pledged himself by an oath to marry Victoria Feraldi, as he had strengthened his promises by an appeal to God as their witness, the affair came under the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical police, and that they must now have recourse to the cardinal-vicar.

The intervention of the police, in cases of conscience, is one of the characteristic features of the pontifical administration; the popes do not consider that they govern men, but souls. Their tribunals partake of the nature of the confessional: the judge is gentle, discreet, familiar, inquisitive, indulgent towards confessed faults, ready to forgive everything but pride and resistance, unskilful in distinguishing a sin from a crime, and a bad Christian

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from a bad citizen; relying much on bolts and bars, an enemy of violent measures, incapable of shedding the blood of a criminal, and capable of forgetting an innocent man in prison. The police is more quarrelsome than rigorous, and more humiliating than oppressive; the government is a velvet-pawed, unctuous, decent, modest despotism, patient because it believes itself eternal. The cardinal-vicar, Prince Odescalchi, was not at all surprised at Cardinal Pezzato's application: it appeared to him perfectly natural, that in order to prevent a young madman from breaking his oaths and offending God, they should have recourse to the authority of the vicar of Jesus Christ. Moreover, the Prince Odescalchi was connected with the Feraldi family: his sister having in 1817 married a first cousin of the Count's. Finally, the virtue, the misfortune, and the beauty of Tolla inspired him with lively interest. Without exactly believing the accusations brought against his private secretary, he had Rouquette written to, and informed that his leave of absence was expired, and that if he wished to retain his situation, he must return at once. Without wishing in any way to do violence to Colonel Coromila's wishes, he promised to summon him to an interview, and to leave no means untried of obtaining his consent. He begged that the Count would send him a short and precise note in the form of a petition, containing, in a space of four pages, the summary of his claims upon Manuel; and further, he asked that the letter, the ring, and the portrait might be sent him, together with extracts of every passage of the correspondence in which the name

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of God was positively invoked. Cardinal Pezzato, accordingly, hurried off to the Feraldi palace, and together with the Count, wrote down the following petition:—

"Most Eminent Prince,—

"The Count Alexander Feraldi finds himself constrained to implore the official intervention of your most reverend Eminence in behalf of a noble, innocent, and virtuous child, who has had the honour of being presented at the baptismal font by the own sister of your Eminence, who is married to the cousin-german of the petitioner.

"This child, the only daughter, and the eldest of the two children of the petitioner, endowed by the goodness of Providence with most rare talents, has received the most Christian, the most noble, and the most virtuous education that our Italy affords. The certificates annexed, and the list of the prizes and second-best premiums which she carried away at the imperial and royal institution of Maria-Louisa at Lucca, will show your Eminence how well she repaid the care bestowed upon her by her parents.

"Returned to her family, all the solicitude of her father and mother was directed to settling her advantageously and honourably. Several matches were proposed which were rejected one after another, none of them appearing worthy of her. Lastly, one of the sons of the very noble and very rich family of Morandi of Ancona, appeared in the lists, and did all in his power to bring the affair to a

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favourable conclusion, as will appear in the original documents now submitted to your Eminence.

"It was then that Manuel, second son of the very illustrious family Coromila-Borghi, who, meeting the young girl in the *réunions* of the nobility, had conceived very affectionate sentiments towards her, presented himself before the petitioner and his wife, accompanied by a very honourable gentleman, the Marquis Trasimeni, and, declaring that he was cognizant of the arrangements about to be concluded with Morandi, requested that all the negociations should be broken off, if it were believed that the young girl would be happy with him, as he was determined to take her for wife. Neither of the Feraldis failed to urge in opposition to Manuel's suit all conceivable difficulties relative to his father's consent, without which Count Feraldi and his wife would never have agreed to such a union. He took upon himself to obtain that consent, there being nothing to raise any legitimate obstacle, since the young girl neither belonged to the lower nor middle classes of society, but was of such rank as to have for aunt the sister of your Eminence, and the daughter of the Prince Barberini.

"After having fully allowed that the step he was then taking rendered him responsible for his father's consent, and the future of the young girl, he renewed his declarations and his oaths, adding that, considering the deplorable state of his father's health, he would wait for his recovery before asking his assent. Reassured by these vows, the Count Feraldi proceeded to inform him that the fortune

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of his daugnter was to be twenty thousand silver sequins; but that to show as well as he could his sense of the honour of such an alliance, he would double that sum, and would give forty thousand sequins in freehold property, situated in the isle of Capri, free from all mortgage, dependency, or ground-rent, forming part of the patrimonial domain of his family: the said property having been valued at forty thousand sequins fifteen years before, on the occasion of a certain division of property then made. Further, in order that Manuel Coromila, in so weighty a matter as this, might decide with full knowledge of the case, the letters of Count Morandi were confided to him. He brought them back on the morrow, and, after having calmly examined them, he renewed all his former pledges. It was after this second and formal declaration that Count Morandi was informed, that however honourable his proposal, it could not be accepted. During the whole of these negociations, the young girl, as became a good Christian, lighted tapers before all the miraculous images, recommended herself to the prayers of all the holiest communities, performed, and had performed, an incredible number of nine-day devotions and *tridui* in order to interest Heaven in the success of the affair.

"In the month of February, it pleased God to call away the Prince Coromila; and Manuel, being of age, became his own master. Considerations of respect and duty bound him, however, to his uncle the colonel, and imperatively urged him to seek to obtain his consent. When solicited to take the necessary steps towards such an end, he made

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answer that he would do so immediately after the marriage of his brother, and he announced his approaching departure for England. The Feraldis, husband and wife alike, had no difficulty in guessing what were the real intentions of the Coromila family in inducing Manuel to take the journey in question. Nevertheless, they were unwilling to believe that it could be the deliberate purpose of that family to lead a young man to perjure himself, and to doom their innocent daughter to be sacrificed. They sent therefore for Manuel Coromila, and, after having adjured him to reflect seriously on what he had already done, and on what might happen hereafter, they declared to him, in presence of the young girl herself, that, if the death of his father had changed his views, or if he foresaw that the journey he was about to take might modify them, there was yet time to take back his pledged word, and that he should be freed from all the obligations he had contracted; but that if, being, as he was, of age and free, he now reiterated his promises, that he must thenceforth remember that his engagement became irrevocable, despite whatever unjust opposition his family might raise. To this declaration he replied by the most formal promises, the most ardent protestations, and the most solemn oaths, never to change.

"Accordingly, in order to engage himself irrevocably, and to close the mouth of all who might wish by false reports to prejudice him against the young girl, he expressed a desire that she should shut herself up during his absence in a cloistered convent, and he himself begged

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their common director, the worthy Abbé La Marmora, to go there to confess her every week. The virtuous Victoria, submissive to the will of him who had sworn to become her husband, passed at once from the brilliant saloons of the capital to the austere life of the cloister. Her prayers and her virtues excited the admiration and gained the good-will of the whole of that religious community: your most reverend Eminence can easily certify yourself of this.

"Meanwhile, the letters of Manuel Coromila came by every post. These letters attest the engagements he had taken upon himself, and the sacrifices made by the young girl. They are full of oaths—not those light oaths which escape almost by accident in the midst of vague love-prattle, but of solemn oaths, accompanied by the most serious ideas and the most religious sentiments. Your most reverend Eminence will remark, in more than ten places, the express invocation of that awful God who will not have His name made an instrument of fraud and imposture. These letters prove in a most striking manner the purity of the sentiments with which both hearts were inflamed.

"The reciprocal advice to frequent the sacraments, the confidence in the goodness of God, the invocation of the Virgin and the saints,—things by no means common in writings of a similar kind, render the whole of this correspondence agreeable and edifying to read, and calculated to touch good and religious hearts. All this continues up to the letter of the 16th of July inclusively.

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"All at once, and contrary to all expectation, the petitioner receives a letter, dated the 11th of the present month, in which Manuel, suddenly changing his tone, invites the petitioner himself, the father of the unhappy girl, to mediate with Colonel Coromila in order to obtain from him the consent he refuses. If this step (useless, absurd, and unbecoming) be unattended with success, Manuel declares that he considers himself freed from all his engagements, alleging that love and passion ought to yield to the imperious claims of family duty. Were we to lay in the balance a passing fancy or a blind attachment, this maxim would be sacred and incontestable; but, in point of fact, it is here perfectly out of place, since to love and passion are joined direct and positive duties, resulting from real obligations contracted by a person who is of age, without his having been led to form them either by constraint, entreaty, or seduction. Add to that the duties of strict justice resulting from the irreparable injury done to a noble and virtuous girl more than twenty years old, who has renounced a most advantageous establishment, who has allowed herself to be compromised in the eyes of the whole of Italy, who has lived for four months shut up in a cloister, and whose health is sufficiently delicate to sink under the loss of her legitimate hopes; finally, who has vowed to take the veil and to renounce all earthly prospects, if she were to be forsaken; add to that, the dreadful sanctity of formal oaths, reiterated both in word and writing, accompanied by the express invocation of God's great name, and your Emi-

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nence will admit that Manuel is not, as he supposes, obliged to choose between his passion and his duty to his uncle, but between a mere tie of gratitude, and the inviolable laws of justice, honour, conscience, and religion.

"Most reverend Eminence, it cannot be that Colonel Coromila should have been informed of the facts above stated; for it is certain that were he aware of them, so accomplished a gentleman and so exemplary a Christian would employ his authority in a very different way than in commanding perjury and sacrilege. If the representations of envy and malice had not misled his mind, he would be the first to favour a plan formed with many prayers, and sanctified by prayer up to the present day. All Rome quotes him as a just and God-fearing man.

"In order to obtain the consent that he refuses, neither threats nor supplications are necessary. He has simply to learn the truth; his heart will be gained as soon as his eyes are unsealed.

"The Count Feraldi is too lofty-minded to plead himself his daughter's cause with the Colonel; but he would be a bad father were he not to wish him to be informed of Manuel's sacred engagements.

"This is why the petitioner throws himself at the feet of your most reverend Eminence. Full of confidence in the efficacy of an interposition, which he hopes for without daring to ask it, he has the distinguished honour, in kissing your sacred purple, to be, with the most profound

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veneration, your most reverend Eminence's very humble, very devoted, and very obedient servant,

"ALEXANDER FERALDI."

That is how people write to a Cardinal-vicar. The petition, copied in a fair round hand upon *jésus-folio* paper, was taken that very evening to the Prince Odescalchi, with extracts from the correspondence and all the letters of Lello, which the Countess borrowed from her daughter under pretext of wishing to read them over. They dared not ask her for the portrait or the ring, for fear of awaking her suspicions.

The following morning, the Colonel went before breakfast to the Cardinal Odescalchi. He could guess very well what might be said to him, and why he was disturbed before twelve o'clock; but he was neither uneasy nor intimidated. He sunk down into the cushions of his carriage with the air of a man who fears nothing in the world but a fit of apoplexy. "Zounds!" muttered he between his teeth, "it is fortunate that Manuel has some millions and some ancestors; if he were Nicholas, the son of Matthew, proprietor of a good pair of arms only, the hypocrites would have already married him in spite of himself and of me. They would have had him watched by some of the agents of public morals; they would have given a hint to his mistress, and, just in the most interesting moment of a rendezvous, he would have seen issue from a wardrobe a priest, two gendarmes, and a chorister. That is done every day, and the girls never cry out against

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the unceremonious manners of the police. As for the poor devil caught in the act, he has to make up his mind without any demur, between marriage, that prison of the soul, or the Castle of St. Angelo, the prison of the body. If he accepts the priest's holy water, the gendarmes serve as witnesses to the marriage; if he decides in favour of the dungeon, the priest serves as witness of the arrest; in both cases, virtue is avenged, the guilty punished; prisoner for ever, or married to perpetuity! But, thank God, jokes of that kind are not made for us; and when public morality takes to playing any of those freaks, she chooses other butts than the Coromilas. What does that old Odescalchi want to say to me, I wonder? He had better mind his own affairs. Because his sister was foolish enough to marry a Feraldi, are all the Roman princes to run their heads into the Feraldi noose? It is the old story of the fox who had had his tail cut; but he will meet a fox and a half in this case! Can he have taken it into his head to read me a lecture? Fie, fie! cardinals do not preach; they leave that to the Capuchins. Besides, whatever he may think of me, he will only tell me half—that is one of the privileges we enjoy, we people of quality—truth is never allowed to appear quite naked before us. The priests revere us, the cardinals respect, the popes conciliate us; and I'd lay a wager that, when all is over here, some circumlocution will be employed in telling us that we are damned!"

He jumped out of the carriage with a sprightly air; but assumed a grave and penitent expression on entering

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the cardinal's room. He read attentively the Count's petition, and the extracts from Manuel's letters, shrugged his shoulders two or three times, murmured some moral reflections on the frivolity of youth, and then gave back all the papers to the Prince Odescalchi.

"Your Eminence," said he, "I thank you for having enlightened me upon this affair."

"I have only done my duty, your Excellency."

"Your Eminence, the Count Feraldi appears to me to be a most worthy man, and I respect him profoundly."

"You do him justice, Excellency."

"The young girl is very interesting."

"She is very interesting, assuredly."

"And my nephew is a very naughty boy!"

"I should not have dared to say so myself; but"—

"It is I who say so. I am not accustomed to keep back the truth. It is evident that Manuel has loved this young girl; that he has won her love; that he has promised to marry her."

"Yes, Excellency."

"Now he loves her no longer."

"I fear it."

"I am sure of it. If he still loved her he would not look about him for bad reasons for breaking with her; he would marry her without troubling himself about what might be said, and without asking any one's consent. When one loves (your Eminence will excuse the freedom of my language), one forgets friends, laws, all the duties

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of gratitude or conventionality, one rushes straight to the goal, without looking behind. Those who think much about asking permission, conciliating friends, appeasing the dissatisfied, are seekers of pretexts, who never loved at all, or who love no longer."

"But," rejoined the Cardinal, "if love be a fleeting sentiment"—

The Colonel interrupted him. "I guess," said he, "what your Eminence is going to say, and I admire the justice of the remark. Yes, if love be indeed a fleeting sentiment, which comes when it likes and goes when it chooses, it is otherwise with the promises, the oaths, the serious and definite actions that we commit under its influence. Love passes away, but obligations last! My nephew is unpardonable."

The Cardinal looked out amongst the file of papers for Manuel's two last letters. "Have you read," asked he, "the two letters in which he throws all the responsibility of his treachery upon you?"

"And that is what I shall never forgive him," replied the Colonel, with energy. "He can marry without my consent; he is of age, his father is dead, he has an independent fortune, no one has a right to call him to account, do what he will; and what crotchet is this that he has taken? and wherefore this vast anxiety to obtain my signature? Wherefore? I know it but too well, and it is a secret that I may confide to your Eminence. Manuel asks me for my consent, because he knows that a superior power forbids my granting it to him."

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"And what voice can speak more loudly than honour, justice, and conscience?"

"The last wish of the dead." The Colonel then approached the Cardinal's arm-chair, and, in a mysterious and solemn voice said, "God and I alone heard the last supreme words of my well-beloved brother, the late Prince Coromila. That excellent father, that sublime Christian, before entering into the bosom of eternal blessedness, left me certain precise orders, relating to the glory and prosperity of his family. He had been informed of the clandestine, but doubtless innocent, relations which existed between his son and the young Victoria. He unqualifiedly disapproved of them, for reasons which he never expressed, and which have now gone down with him into the grave. One thing I know, and Manuel is not ignorant of it either, it is that the Prince forbade me to bless their union, and that his last sigh was adverse to the Feraldi family."

"But the name of the Feraldis is without spot; their nobility dates from four centuries back; their fortune"—

"Have a care, your Eminence. I, for my part, perfectly agree with you; and you are but arguing with the dead!"

The Cardinal rose, the Colonel followed his example. "Excellency," said the Prince Odescalchi, "I am happy to see that, in common with all men of honour, you too blame the conduct of your nephew. I shall impart this consolation to the Feraldi family; but I must eternally regret that, when a word would suffice to bring this young

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man back to his duty, reasons connected with the other world should prevent your speaking it."

"My words, your Eminence, have not all the influence that you deign to attribute to them—only magic words have the power of changing the heart! My nephew no longer loves Victoria. Were I to grant him my consent, he would himself suggest some new obstacle; he would be capable of saying that he required the consent of his father. I, like you, feel much interested in the situation of this unhappy Count; and, in order to save both him and you from taking any more useless steps, I believe it my duty to confess to you Manuel's latest fault. He loves elsewhere. In spite of the sage counsels of Monsignor Rouquette, whose virtues are known to you, he has fallen in love with some actress or other, who has cost him, up to this present time, nearly two hundred thousand francs, or as much as Mademoiselle Feraldi's fortune! It is for you to decide, now that you know all, whether there is not positive cruelty, in leaving behind the convent grating a young girl whose lover is losing himself in guilty pleasures!"

As soon as the Colonel had left, Prince Odescalchi wrote as follows to the Count:—"I have been able to obtain nothing; come this evening, at the *Ave Maria*, with his Eminence, the Cardinal Pezzato: we will hold a council." Menico, who had been waiting in an antechamber, received the note from the hands of the Prince's chamberlain, and ran off with it, as fast as his legs could carry him, to the Feraldi palace. Tolla's family, together

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with the Marchioness and Philip, burst into tears at the reading of this sentence. "It is my fault," said the poor Countess, weeping; "I ought not to have received him before he obtained his family's consent."

"It was I who brought him," said Philip. "I believed, like a fool, that his uncle was a good sort of man."

"I am more guilty than thou art," interposed the Marchioness; "I knew well that the Colonel would never permit this marriage, and yet I said nothing!"

"Ah!" muttered Victor Feraldi, fiercely; "Colonel Coromila wants to keep his nephew to himself, does he? We shall see."

"I swear," said Philip, "that he shall not keep him long; for I will kill him in his arms, if there are two steel blades left on earth."

The Marchioness quickly rose, and went to put on again the bonnet and shawl that she had laid aside on coming in. "Wait for me," said she; "I am going to speak to the Chevalier Coromila."

She pronounced these words in the tone with which one condemned to death would say to his executioner, "I am ready." Her son and her friends let her go without a question, a remark, or a gesture. Philip knew her aversion to the Colonel,—Madame Feraldi guessed the cause of it; each of them recognised in this simple and unobtrusive step, the same sublime devotion that animates martyrs.

She entered the Coromila palace a few minutes after

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the Colonel. The huge man was just going to sit down to table. The announcement of so unexpected a visit deprived him of his appetite. However, he concealed his embarrassment beneath a kind of military politeness, and offered the Marchioness a seat, saluting her, meanwhile, with the appellation of "Fair lady."

"Pietro Coromila," said she; "you may imagine that there must be some powerful motive to lead me, after more than twenty years, to awake my sorrows and your remorse."

"The deuce!" thought the Colonel; "can the beautiful Assunta be tired of a widowed life, and would she... Ha! ha! the Coromilas are in great request of late!" He went on to say: "I was in hopes, Marchioness, that my friend Trasimeni would have buried your sorrow, as he has buried my remorse. However, should it please you to revert to the past, we will discuss it together. I can sympathize with all kinds of tastes, without excepting the love of ancient history; and besides, I have never been able to refuse anything to beauty. Now, you are still beautiful, Assunta,—as beautiful, and perhaps more so, than on the day of our first kiss."

The Marchioness was seized with a short, dry cough, and the colour rose to her cheeks for a moment; her stay at Florence had not cured her. "It is not of myself," said she, "that I am come to speak to you,—it is of Tolla."

"Again!" exclaimed the Colonel, involuntarily.

He continued, more gently—"Madame, I have just left

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the Cardinal-vicar; he has already said to me all that you can possibly have to say upon this unfortunate subject; I implore you not to oblige me to repeat to you the answers I have given him."

"Do not fear; I shall avoid all repetitions, and I shall say to you what no one besides me has any right to say. You know with what resignation I have endured the destiny that you imposed upon me, and that I sacrificed myself, without a complaint, to your selfishness, and to the ambition of your family."

"You found a consoler."

"Be silent, my poor Pietro: when one has not a soldier's honour, one should not affect his brutality. I have given you back your word and all your letters, as one gives back title-deeds and bonds to an insolvent debtor. I have dragged out my life for nearly a quarter of a century in the same town with you—sad in the midst of the happy, dead in the midst of the living—without a single look of mine ever reproaching you with your conduct and my suffering; but, though I have patiently supported every conceivable torture myself, I am unable to look on with folded hands at another's martyrdom, and I rebel at last. You have this morning, in presence of the Cardinal-vicar, pronounced Tolla's sentence of death."

"She will not die of it, Madame. All those whom we have killed are still remarkably well."

"You think so!"

It is impossible to convey the tone of grief, bitterness,

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and disappointment, with which she uttered these words. Any other than the Colonel would have shuddered as if listening to the death-rattle. But he merely sneered, and replied, still dwelling complacently on his witticism, "You are as fresh as a rose."

The Marchioness could no longer contain herself. "Coward," said she, "you have not yet forgiven me for not dying at once, and the little life that still remains to me is an offence to your vanity! You consider that my death-struggle has been too long, and that I ought to have been quicker about it to do credit to you. Well, then! be comforted. Tolla will not hold out so long. I can see her fading away, and I promise you that she will soon expire, to the honour of Manuel, in the prison where he himself has immured her. It will be publicly acknowledged that the Coromilas have not degenerated, nay, that they have improved in the art of killing women; but, after this noble triumph, I advise you carefully to conceal your dear Lello: Philip has some heart, he is the worthy son of a good man, he loves Tolla as a sister, he will avenge her."

"If Philip be the worthy son of his father," bitterly replied the Colonel, "he will marry Mademoiselle Feraldi instead of avenging her. Who knows if the sovereign Maker of all has not invented the Trasimenis to console the victims of the Coromilas?"

When the Marchioness was gone, the Colonel felt relieved, but not satisfied. Madame Trasimeni's last words still weighed upon his heart, and he feared both for the

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reputation and the life of Manuel. Before he attended to the entreaties of his steward, and to the appeal of his breakfast, he wrote to Rouquette and gave orders to Cocomero. To Rouquette he said, "I trust Lello's life to your care; do not leave him under any pretext whatsoever. It is probable that the Cardinal Odescalchi will recall you; but turn a deaf ear. If you lose your place I will indemnify you amply: the Rothschild house has fifty thousand francs for you. Young Feraldi and his friend Philip will go and pick a quarrel with our child: contrive to keep him out of their way. Read every day the list of arrivals in Paris, and at the first hint of danger set off for England, without telling any one where you are going. Meanwhile, by way of further precaution, frequent the shooting-gallery of Lepage, and Bertrand's fencing-room."

To Cocomero he declared that it was absolutely necessary, for the honour of the Coromila family, that Mademoiselle Feraldi should leave St. Antoine as soon as possible.

"How is that to be brought about, Excellency?"

"You ask me, animal? That is for you to discover: I pay you for being quick-witted. Deliberate with your associate the Russian lady."

"She is not my associate, your Excellency. It is"....

"I don't care to know who it is. Have you spoken to the lady's-maid?"

"Yes, Excellency, last night. She will come out if a marriage portion be given her."

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"Promise her a thousand crowns, and let her come out this very day. You must bring her to me at once."

Now, this sum of a thousand crowns made Amarella ponder. For six hundred francs she would have come out without bargaining; but she thought a thousand crowns a meagre recompense for merely stepping over a threshold. That's the way with peasants: offer them five francs for an old trunk, they strike hands with you; offer them fifty and they want ten thousand—that's their lowest price. Don't try to discuss the matter with them, they will not let it go for less. You have persuaded them that the trunk contains a treasure. Poor Cocomero became a regular visitor at the parlour of St. Antoine. On the 1st of October, after thirty-seven days of discussion, he had not advanced one inch.

Count Feraldi had employed all this time in a desperate struggle with Manuel's reluctant will. Too certain that the obstinacy of the uncle would resist all remonstrances, he had fallen back upon the nephew, and never wearied of writing to him; but Manuel had a clever counsel at hand. M. Feraldi came out of the study of the Cardinal-vicar, the oratory of the Marchioness, or the convent parlour, with arguments that he believed unanswerable. Manuel, between two glasses of champagne, in a private apartment at the Café Anglais, or in Cornélie's boudoir, devised a triumphant reply to every argument. If the Count reminded him that he had promised to love Tolla until death, he imperturbably replied that until death he would love Tolla,

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"But," rejoined the Count, "you added, 'I swear never to have any other wife than Victoria Feraldi.'"

"Have I, then, taken any other?" asked Manuel.

"You have said and written to Tolla, 'I will marry thee.'"

"And I am ready to do so, as soon as ever I have obtained the consent of my relatives."

"You have declared that if your relatives obstinately persisted in refusing their consent, you would prove yourself able to dispense with it."

"No doubt, after having exhausted all possible means of conciliation; but I am far from having exhausted them; it may even be that they are inexhaustible."

If the Count attempted to remind him of the noble sacrifice made by Tolla, and the courage she had shown in immuring herself in a cloister, Manuel would triumphantly enumerate all his efforts to remove her thence. The Count complained of the scandalous publicity which had been given to the letter of the 11th of August; Manuel blamed the indiscretion of those who had submitted the correspondence to his uncle.

During the whole progress of this correspondence, in which Manuel pushed shuffling and double dealing to the verge of impertinence, the gentleness and moderation of the Count never for a moment forsook him. He would refute the most transparent lies without expressing a doubt of Lello's sincerity; he would treat the most notorious falsehoods as errors and misunderstandings; he predicted that the slight clouds that had arisen between him and his

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son-in-law would be dispelled at a breath; he avoided, through politeness, and partly, perhaps, through prudence too, to place Lello too much in the wrong; and carefully abstained from any allusion to the life he was then leading in Paris. His letters, written in the deepest grief and the most legitimate indignation, all began with "*My dear Manuel Coromila,*" and ended with "*your very affectionate servant and friend.*" Manuel, on his side, wrote "*My dear Count,*" and signed himself "*vostro affettuosissimo servo ed amico.*" Tolla heard nothing either of the letters or the answers.

But she was not the more happy. Manuel had only written, from the 16th of July to the 1st of October, the one letter of the 11th of August,—which her parents had taken good care to keep back from her; she had therefore been two months and a half without any tidings of her lover. Her attachment had resisted even this cruel ordeal; she loved despairingly, but still she loved. She wrote unweariedly to one who no longer answered. Never was a complaint heard to pass her lips; her tranquil and resigned sorrow edified the whole convent; and the nuns learned from her the sublime art of suffering without a murmur, and of adoring the well-beloved even in his severities. The more austere among them attached a mystical meaning to the sad romance that was going on under their eyes; they commented upon it as certain innocent, fervent spirits have commented upon Solomon's Song of songs. "May we," said they, "love our Divine Spouse as she loves her Lello." The drawing-rooms of

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Rome, once hostile to Tolla, now began to turn against her enemies. Her misfortune and her courage were everywhere quoted, and soon nothing else was spoken of. In the absence of all other subjects of interest, in a country where politics are obscure and underground, where the newspapers are as insignificant as almanacs, where law-suits are clandestinely judged in a vault, where the theatre has no freedom, and therefore no interest, public attention, which catches at everything within reach, was now exclusively directed to the convent of St. Antoine. The Romans have kind hearts and ready tears; their sensibility is rather commonplace, to be sure, and untempered by the irony of which we are so proud; they have more openness, more *abandon*, more fervour and less wit than we. The whole of Rome then applauded, as though they had been at the theatre, the noble conduct of young Morandi, who came for the third time to ask the Count for Tolla's hand. Morandi was for eight days the pride of Italy; until the very moment when he left for Ancona, without having obtained anything besides the thanks and the tears of the Feraldi family, he went from one ovation to the other. The peasants coming in to market, or the masons going to their work, shouted out to him, in their loudest voice, *Bravo, ser pajno!*— "Well done, most noble sir!" These brilliant tokens of the general opinion made all Tolla's enemies shrink out of sight. All those who had been turned against her by a petty jealousy, forgave her from the day that she inspired more pity than envy. Even Madame Fratief, whose

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feelings could not change, since her interest remained the same, felt herself obliged to call upon Madame Feraldi; and came with Nadine to bring a few condoling grimaces into the palace where her calumnies had made so many tears to flow. Such were the thrills of public opinion that they actually penetrated the convent walls, and reached the ears of Tolla. In spite of the admirable precautions taken by her parents, and the express orders of Doctor Ely, who declared that any bad news might kill her, the indiscreet compassion of friends, an awkward allusion to Manuel's treachery, a severe censure passed on Rouquette, put her upon the right track; the ingenious hatred of Amarella did the rest. This creature, born bad and rendered worse by a baffled passion, even went so far as to give her mistress to understand that there existed written proofs of her being forsaken. Nothing can be better calculated to give an idea of the anguish and the resignation of Tolla, than this letter, chosen out of all those that she wrote to Manuel:—

"Rome, *September* 16, 1838.

"Two months to-day since I have received a single line from thee; why is this, my Lello? They tell me that it is because thou lovest me no longer. Thy name and that of Monsignor Rouquette are on every lip, accompanied by the most infamous epithets. They relate a thousand anecdotes which dishonour thee; they say that thou makest it an amusement to deceive girls and to cause their death; they enumerate those whom thou hast

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already ruined. Judge if I have reason to suffer, I, who know thy heart, who remember thy oaths, and who am sure that thou wilt never be untrue to them! Every time that a visitor comes to the grating, I am terrified. They wanted to persuade me that thou wert unfaithful; I answered that I would never believe it. 'What! not if you were to see the written proofs of it?' they asked.' I said that that was impossible, but that if I did see any wicked writing to that effect, I should reply that it was not thine, or that they had extorted it from thee, and that thy lips would contradict thy hand; in short, that I should only believe myself betrayed when thou thyself hadst told me so. I have sworn it; whatever I may see, whatever I may hear, I will believe nothing till thy return. To all that is said, I merely reply, 'It is impossible,' and thus I silence them. But yet thou dost not write to me; why pain me thus? Art thou afraid of telling me thy uncle's answer? I have guessed it already, and made up my mind to it. I will reconcile thee with him when I am thy wife. But thou hast written to me; they must have intercepted thy letters; it is impossible that thou shouldest not have written—a mortal enemy who had implored thee as I have done, would have at least obtained a few lines. If thou wert to see thy Tolla, my kind Lello, thou wouldst be sorry for her. I never laugh, I sleep very little, and that little is so disturbed by dreams, that I wake each moment. All day long I weep at the feet of the Blessed Virgin, imploring her to come to my aid. I rise, too, during the night to pray to God, and my prayers

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are always steeped in tears; sometimes my sobs choke me. Ah, come back soon, if thou wishest me to live! I have suffered enough, I feel that my strength is exhausted; and if one could die of sorrow, thou wouldst long ago have had no Tolla. But be certain of this, my strength may fail me, but not my courage; they will despair of my life before I shall doubt thy honour, and I shall take with me into the grave my faith in thy promises, and my confidence in thee."

The lover of Mademoiselle Cornélie (it is Manuel that I mean) had so many occupations, that he left to Rouquette the task of looking over his correspondence.

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CHAPTER X.

On the 1st of October, Cocomero made a satisfactory advance into Amarella's confidence. He brought her a copy of that dreadful letter of the 11th of August, having himself made, at Nadine's dictation, about twenty such. Amarella, enchanted to hold in her hands the weapon with which to assassinate her mistress, opened her heart to the amiable Neapolitan.

"Do not suppose," said she, "that it is interest which keeps me here; it is a nobler passion—hatred. When you saw me refuse so many magnificent offers, one after the other, you thought perhaps that I only wanted to get together a larger portion, and that my covetousness grew with your promises. No, my dear sir; but what shall I do with a portion, if I do not find a husband?"

"You will find plenty. Money attracts men as grain does sparrows, and in the whole course of Roman history, it has never been seen that a girl with a good portion has turned out an old maid."

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"Yes, if I chose to put up with any paltry fellow! But when one *wishes well* to any one!"

The Italians have a whole dictionary of love-phraseology. To *wish well*, is to love passionately. They do not say the lover, but the *neighbour* of a married woman; the Marquis So-and-so is neighbour to (*aviccina*) such and such a Countess, who lives a league from his palace.

Amarella went on to relate at full length, how she wished well to a young man who only wished her evil. She informed Cocomero of the name of her ungrateful swain, of the services she had rendered him, and how she had saved his life the evening that he had been struck down in the twilight by a cowardly assassin. Cocomero bowed. Then she inveighed against her mistress, whom she accused of being Dominique's accomplice.

"In short," said she, "for four months I feed on nothing but love and hatred; and only live to marry Menico, and to be revenged on Tolla."

"Why, my dear child, did you not say so before? Your desires are legitimate, and they shall be satisfied, if there be any justice on earth. What more natural than to do good to those one loves, and harm to those one detests? God himself does not act otherwise: He has made paradise for His friends, and hell for His foes. But why not have spoken before? I should have had you both avenged and married a good month ago."

"Married to Dominique?"

"To himself."

"You are, then, an angel of heaven?"

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"Not quite."

"A member of the police?"

"Perhaps so."

"You can oblige him to marry me?"

"Is this the first time that the pontifical police meddles with marriages?"

"Do not deceive me, I pray you; will this.... affair take place soon?"

"It is now four o'clock; before midnight, you shall have received the sacrament."

"And what must I do?"

"Hardly anything; you will go and carry this letter to your mistress."

"That is my revenge."

"You will tell her that since all hope is over for her, and that she is only remaining in the convent for her own pleasure, you do not intend eternally to keep her company."

"Have no fear, I will tell her that and more besides. And then?"

"You will immediately quit St. Antoine, and you will take possession of the lodging that I have got ready for you, *Via de' Pontifici*, 24. Do not forget to leave your new address here. Menico must know where you are to be found. He loves Tolla, you say?"

"I am sure of it."

"It was he who induced you to shut yourself up with her."

"He alone."

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"He will come this evening to implore you to return to the convent. He must find you in bed. You will dispute the point, make objections, in short, prolong the discussion till midnight. Then you will hear a violent knocking at the door, you will scream with terror, you will fear to be compromised, and you will conceal him in a closet. I will manage the rest."

"You will be there?"

"No, I must not appear. It is the Cardinal-vicar who will be at the expense of the ceremony. I will let him know about nine o'clock, by an anonymous letter, that you have left the convent to run to a rendezvous. The cardinal is a holy man, the sworn enemy of immorality; he will send the priest and the gendarmes."

"And .... I shall have the fine fortune that you have promised me?"

"This very evening I will give you one thousand crowns; you will sign a receipt for two thousand."

"Yesterday you offered to give me two thousand crowns!"

"Yes, but I did not offer to give you Menico."

The bargain concluded, Amarella ran up to her mistress's room. Tolla was seated upon a low chair, before a little ebony table, her head bowed, her arms hanging listlessly down. She had begun a letter to Lello without having the courage to finish it. For more than a week past, she had been suffering in a singular way: her appetite had daily diminished, and in spite of all the

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efforts she made, she often left the table without having eaten anything. She felt all the springs of her being slacken, her proud will, her prompt energy, were slowly escaping, as wine from out a cracked goblet. All her senses, formerly so alert and happy, were slow, blunted, and dull; the sun appeared to her tarnished, the air cold, and music muffled. All her chaste and exquisitely moulded *embonpoint* had melted away like wax; her cheeks were hollow, and their pretty dimples looked like large holes. The paleness of her face seemed less fresh and luminous; her skin was no longer the transparent network beneath which one saw the life-blood run. Her large eyes had acquired a mournful and despairing beauty; they only gave out pale smiles and extinguished lightnings. Her hands were so weak, that a moment before Amarella's entrance, she had let her pen fall as too heavy a burden. A handkerchief, stained with blood, lay on the floor at her feet: her nose had bled more than twenty times during the last week. Amarella contemplated this utter depression and woe, as a skilful workman contemplates his handiwork just before he adds the finishing touch. She was pitiless; she told, without any disguise, all that she knew of Lello's treachery; she added to what she had heard, all the details that her imagination could suggest; she painted him consoled, joyous, surrounded by mistresses, and reading, to enliven some orgy or other, the lamentable letters written by Tolla. Her words were full of an oppressive pity; she crushed her mistress beneath odious consolations, and one could

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trace the triumph and insolence of her looks through the false tears that she made an effort to shed. In conclusion, she took her leave and gave the letter.

Tolla remained more than an hour before that sentence of death, which she looked at without reading, which she read without understanding, which she understood at length, but with such confusion of mind, that she was not aware of its whole import. She turned it about in her hands, and played with it like a child with a knife. She did not even perceive that the handwriting was not her lover's; and when, at six o'clock, they came to tell her that her mother was waiting for her in the parlour, she was found mechanically kissing the autograph of Cocomero.

The Countess, reassured by her daughter's apparent resignation, confessed the whole truth, told her of Lello's letters, the measures taken by the Cardinal and the Marchioness, the Colonel's refusal, the answers dictated by Rouquette, and the loss of their latest hope.

"My child," said she, "Amarella is right; you must leave the convent."

These words brought on a violent crisis. Tolla burst into tears. Her memory, her judgment, her passion, her energies, all reawoke at once. She exclaimed—

"It is impossible! He is not capable of betraying me. Those letters are written for his uncle; he wants to gain him over by a semblance of submission. You have understood nothing; you do not know him: I am the only one who does know him. Do not judge him! He is

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true, I will answer for him. It is impossible that in the space of four months, so tender and religious a heart should have become that of a monster. His letters are full of the highest sentiments; they are as fragrant as the incense in churches. He tells me to pray to God, to the saints, to the Virgin Mary; he prays himself from morning to night. Would he dare to speak to God if he loved me no longer? Besides, he knows my vow: dost thou believe that he would be cruel enough to doom me to the convent for my life long? What would become of me if he were to forsake me? What should I do with my heart? God would not accept it; He demands that we should be His entirely. My poor mother! how much thou must have suffered for these last two months! It was for thy sake that I wished to be happy; the sight of my happiness would have done thee so much good! And now I am preparing for thee a sorrowful old age. But dost thou really believe that he can have forgotten all that he promised me?"

Thereupon she quoted, with feverish volubility, long speeches and whole letters of Manuel, then she fell back into a more gentle and quiet dejection; begged her mother to send Amarella again to her for a few days; requested that her confessor might come to see her on the morrow, Tuesday, as she wished to receive the communion on Wednesday, the day dedicated to St. Joseph. At eight o'clock she took leave of her mother, who internally rejoiced at seeing her so calm after a state of such violent agitation. She went up to her room holding on to the

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balustrade of the staircase. As she was crossing the covered gallery leading to her cell, she turned, while murmuring a prayer, towards the Basilique of Santa Maria-Maggiore. At that moment her knees bent under her, a sudden dazzling obliged her to shut her eyes, and she thought she heard a voice from above saying to her—

"Why dost thou weep? Hast thou not a tender mother in heaven?"

She slept a troubled restless sleep, and awoke the next day with a violent headache. She got up, and, dragging herself with difficulty to her little looking-glass, she was frightened at the change in her features. Her weakness, and a fit of shivering, which lasted more than ten minutes, obliged her to go back to bed. When the nuns came to inquire for her, she had a raging pulse, a flushed face, a dry skin, an inflamed throat, and a burning inward pain: the attack was so unforeseen, and rapid in its progress, that they had no time to send her back to her family, as the rules of the convent prescribed. The Countess, who was instantly sent for, came in all haste with her medical man. Doctor Ely at once discovered all the symptoms of typhus fever, and immediately bled the patient. He attempted to comfort the Countess by assuring her, that of all the forms of the disease, the inflammatory was the most hopeful: he took care to conceal the fact that the malady is almost always incurable when it has been induced by moral causes. Madame Feraldi would have wished her daughter to be carried home carefully wrapped up: she accused the air of the convent of being unhealthy. The

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doctor ascribed the mischief to other causes, such as grief, privation, and home-sickness. Tolla had suffered beyond the limit of her strength, she had lived upon fasting and abstinence, and, since the eve of the first of May, she had exiled herself from the spring, from fresh air, and from liberty.

For seven whole days she lived on without sleep, without rest, agitated by painful dreams, prostrated by an insupportable headache which weighed down her mind. Whenever she was free from delirium, she tried to console her mother. She never for a single moment doubted that this was a fatal illness. On the very second day she insisted upon writing a letter to Lello.

"Were I to wait longer," said she, "I should no longer be able to bid him farewell."

In the absence of the Countess, a young nun wrote the following letter, at Tolla's dictation:—

"Dost thou remember, Lello, that long ago we agreed never to go to bed without being at peace with each other? Let us be reconciled, my friend: I am going to sleep for a long time. Yesterday morning I lay down again with a high fever; it seems that it is typhus. The dear doctor declares that people hardly ever die of it; but I feel certain that I shall never recover. It is my own fault: I have spent too many nights in prayer, I have fasted too often. I ought to have known that one cannot with impunity play thus with health. Do not look out for any other causes of my death: it is the punishment of my imprudence. My mother fancies that the air of the

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convent has done me harm, but the doctor affirms that it is not so: I tell thee this to prove to thee that thou hast no cause to reproach thyself; thou wilt have sorrow enough! How all our plans are changed now! We shall go neither to Venice, nor to Lariccia, nor to Capri. When I appear in the presence of the Almighty, I hope that He will forgive me for having loved thee better than Him. As for thee, thou wilt live long; I will pray my guardian angel to add my years to thine. Be happy in return for all the happiness thou hast given me. When thou saidst to me: *Tolla mia!* I saw the heavens open. Thou hast promised me never to marry if by any chance thou wert to lose me: that was a promise that held good formerly, at the time when we thought ourselves eternal; but now I command thee to forget it. Thou wilt not disobey my last request? Choose a gentle and pious wife, who will not forbid thee to pray for me. If thou hast a daughter, try to obtain permission to call her Tolla: in this way thou wilt remember my name all thy life. I think that we should have had pretty children, and that I should have brought them up well. Adieu. When thou receivest this letter, give a kiss to my poor little picture: it will be all remaining on earth of thy faithful TOLLA."

This letter, signed by Tolla's own hand, was discreetly carried to the post, and set off that very evening by the land mail, unknown to the Feraldi family. The Count and Victor were in despair at not being able to get into the convent. At the end of September, M. Fer-

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aldi, possessed with the idea that they were reserving Lello for some rich marriage or other, had taken an official step with the view of fettering his liberty. According to the claims put in by him, and verified by the Cardinal-vicar, the head of the marriage-office (*il deputato dei matrimonj*), had placed the *advertatur* before the name of Manuel. "If we cannot constrain him to marry Tolla, we will at least prevent him from marrying any one else." But death was about to baffle all the calculations of this paternal prudence, and to restore entire liberty to young Coromila.

Victor, weary of shedding useless tears, and of wandering night and day round the convent of St. Antoine, disappeared on the evening of the 4th of October. They could not trace him beyond Civita-Vecchia, and his mother guessed with a shudder that he had embarked there for France. The whole of Rome took part in the grief of the Feraldi family. All the religious communities undertook nine-day devotions; the *Sepolte vive* condemned themselves to the painful penance of the ascension of the Calvary; the Capuchins sent in great pomp the celebrated image of St. Joseph, said to have saved so many sick people; several churches offered miraculous relics; Madame Fratief got her family *Codex*, and the green-lizard recipe conveyed to Dr. Ely. All the town was in prayer, as if each separate family had had a child in danger of death.

In order to supply the place of Amarella, who was nowhere to be found, four veiled nuns remained con-

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stantly in the sick girl's cell, and as many lay sisters we in attendance outside. The poor sisters embraced wi enthusiasm the fatigues and the anxieties of a calling new to them. Condemned by their vows to the holy i action of perpetual prayers, they were too happy to able to exercise those treasures of active charity whi every woman has within her; they vied with each oth for the privilege of sitting up at night. From time time, one of the nurses stole out of the room to we freely; who, indeed, would not have wept in seeing c so much youth and so much beauty?

On the 8th of October, another stage of the disease s in; the headache disappeared, the thirst was less ragin the inward pain was scarcely felt; but the pulse w wretchedly weak, the stupor profound, the depression e treme, the breathing laboured; the rattling in the pc creature's throat most distressing. On the 10th, th administered the holy viaticum, and the crowd followe in long procession, the gilt carriage that bore it. (Saturday the 12th, the bulletin was decidedly favourab and a ray of joy lit up the city. Some men, in their sh sleeves, came to cry out beneath the Colonel's windov "Save Tolla!" The Colonel set out that very eveni for Albano. Tolla made use of the respite death allow her, to break the last ties that bound her to earth. S had her ring of betrothal carried to the Madonna of Sai Agostino, who possesses the richest jewels in the worl she sent back Manuel's portrait to the Coromila palac but Dominique, who carried it, having had the impruden

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to let it be seen, the people burnt it in the middle of the Corso, without respect to the genius of the artist, or the beauty of the painting. On the following day, every ray of hope was extinguished; the dying one received extreme unction, and the Countess was forced away from her daughter, whom she was not to see again. Tolla, stretched out motionless, no longer received any impression from the external world. Far removed from all that surrounded her, she heard neither the prayers of the community, nor the benediction of the Abbé La Marmora, nor the sobs of the good old doctor, who had ushered her into life, and could not snatch her from death. She had asked St. Joseph to deign to receive her on a Wednesday; her last wish was granted, and it was on Wednesday, the 17th October, at the first stroke of the *Ave Maria*, that she entered into the repose of the just. Her life was exhaled in so faint a sigh, that it was hardly heard by those who surrounded the bed. As the Superior said, in giving an account of the event to the Cardinal-vicar, "It was not a death, it was the gentle passage of a pure soul into the bosom of God."

The convent that she had sanctified by her martyrdom sent three separate embassies to the Count, to implore the favour of keeping her relics, and the people already spoke of her as of a saint. But the Count Feraldi considered that it was part of his honour and his revenge to have her conducted in pomp to the tomb of her family. He had influence enough to obtain what is not granted once in ten years—the right of having her carried uncovered

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on a bed of white velvet, and of sparing her the horrors of a coffin. They wrapped the dear remains in the white muslin dressing-gown that she wore in the garden on the day when she formed such sweet plans with Lello. The Marchioness Trasimeni, ill herself, and grown very thin, came to arrange her hair, and to dress it in her favourite style. Every garden in Rome was stripped to send her flowers; they had more than they could make use of. On the Thursday evening, at half-past seven, the funeral set out for the Church of the Holy Apostles, where the Feraldis have their burial-place. The body was preceded by a long file of black and white brotherhoods, each carrying their banner. The red light of the torches played on the face of the beautiful dead, and seemed to animate it anew. A detachment of twenty-four grenadiers accompanied the procession, both to do honour to the Feraldi family, and to protect the Coromila palace. As they crossed the Corso, a low murmur ran through the crowds, and some torches were let fall at the Colonel's door; the soldiers hastened to extinguish them. The funeral procession swept on towards the arch of the Carbognani, took the street of Virgins, and entered the Church of the Holy Apostles. The piazza was thronged with people, thickly pressed together, and perfectly dumb. —not a cry came to disturb the grief of the friends and relations of Tolla, who were weeping together at the Feraldi palace.

At the very moment the hearse stopped at the church door, a post-chaise, drawn by four horses, came galloping

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up, and was stopped by Dominique. A young man, asleep in the carriage, woke up, saw the procession, uttered a cry, jumped through the door, and fled away, running like a madman—it was Manuel Coromila!

This is what had happened at Paris. On the 11th of October, Cornélie celebrated, with a large party of her friends, the return of the fine winter season. They laughed a little, played a good deal, and drank enormously. Rouquette got five hundred louis, and Manuel a headache. The next day at noon, Rouquette was gone out, and Manuel still in bed, when the waiter brought in two letters. Manuel sent him off to Rouquette, but Rouquette was not to be found, and one of the letters required an immediate answer. Manuel opened it without noticing the direction, and read as follows:—

"My only true Prince,—

"I take pleasure in thinking that the son of the Coromilas is soundly reposing upon his laurels. That will teach him to drink more than his gauge. Arrange matters so that he may sleep for thirty-six hours; I know him, he is quite capable of it. I shall expect thee this evening, or rather, at half an hour before morning, and I will prove to thee that the proverb is an old fool, and that one may be lucky at cards without being unlucky in love! Burn my letter: should he chance to find it, he would bark like a *doge*. Cornélie."

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The other letter was Tolla's last farewell. Manuel left the first in Rouquette's apartments, after having added to it, in his own handwriting, "In whatever place I find you, I will kill you as I would a dog." That very evening he took the mail to Marseilles. As he crossed one of the courtyards at the Hôtel des Postes, he heard the name of Feraldi indistinctly pronounced; he had a strange buzzing in his ears. At the same moment, he ran against a young man who was like Victor; he believed himself a prey to the tormenting illusions of remorse. At Marseilles, he found a boat just getting its steam up for Civita-Vecchia; at Civita, he threw himself into the first carriage offered him; he made the whole long journey in six days—weeping, praying, and swearing to marry Tolla, if he found her alive. Grief and fatigue had changed his outward appearance much; but he was recognised and followed by Dominique.

Dominique had allowed himself to be married without resistance—a prison would have separated him from Tolla. Five minutes after the priest had left, he made use of his newly-gained authority to send off his wife to Velletri, where she had relations. When Tolla's recovery was despaired of, he bought a knife, and had it blessed by the Pope: it was to kill Manuel. The knives belonging to the common people in Rome are of the same shape as the Catalonian; they have got a steel ring by which they can be suspended to a string; the blade is firmly fixed by a coarse spring, but it is not more pointed than a foil with a button on. The police enjoin the cutlers, under pain of

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the galleys, to leave a piece of rounded steel at the point of every knife. Dominique sharpened his by rubbing it on a stone. He then went to buy a dozen rosaries; the shopkeepers who sell them guarantee getting them properly blessed. They shut them up in a box, and send them to the Vatican. Dominique cunningly slipped his weapon under the rosaries, and two days later he got it back sanctified by the hands of Gregory XVI. It was with that consecrated knife in his hand, that he set out in pursuit of Manuel. He came up with him in the middle of the St. Angelo Bridge, just in time to see him leap into the Tiber. He dashed in after him, and dragged him ashore. "Since you wish to die," said he, "I condemn you to live. You do not deserve to go and rejoin her. I was following you to kill you; but I would not do so for the world, now that I know you are capable of feeling remorse. Go to your bed, and sleep if you can! The service is fixed for to-morrow at eleven—all the world will be there; you must not fail to meet them,—for it is you who give the fête!"

The mass for the dead was celebrated by the Cardinal Pezzato. The whole town assembled to admire, for the last time, this flower of virtue and beauty. Her face was calm and smiling; death had effaced all the ravages of disease: Tolla was again, for one day, the prettiest girl of Rome. All the poets of the States of the Church published sonnets in her praise; twenty artists asked leave to take her picture, foreseeing that they might be called upon to paint angels. The pious women who came

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to kiss her feet, cut the velvet drapery into shreds. The soldiers who mounted guard over the bier were blinded by tears. No Christian left the church without wiping his eyes. Nadine Fratief wept more becomingly than any one: she had practised it in the morning before her mirror.

Eighteen years have passed since the catastrophe of this historical drama, which began in the middle of a ball-room, and finished around a tomb.

Of the different personages that I have represented, some are living still. Lello has never married: he resides at his palace in Venice, in peace with the whole world, himself excepted. Philip and Victor spared his life, just as did Dominique, for fear of delivering him from the tortures of remorse. The Colonel, whose good digestion was never impaired by a shade of regret, died about two years ago from an apoplectic seizure. After his supper he slipped under the table as usual, and rose no more. All drunkards allow that his end was worthy of his life. Rouquette is still alive and well: he had made his escape from the hotel Meurice a quarter of an hour before the arrival of Victor Feraldi. He has never been seen again at Rome, and his ambition has renounced the pursuit of ecclesiastical dignities. His passion for excitement, which will never be extinguished in him, threw him into business; and, for some time past, he has been one of the knights-errant of speculation. The money of the Coromilas has prospered in his hands; and you will hear him classed on the Bourse with the best—

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I mean by that the richest people. Since his fortune is made, he has set up principles. He declaims against Voltaire, and has a *liaison* with a dancer.

The General's widow found out, to her amazement, that Manuel had never thought of Nadine. The first time that she had him sounded by the Canoness of Certeux, he answered, with a shrug of his shoulders, "I will think of it some years hence, when I want a nurse." Since this discovery, the mother and daughter have traversed the whole world, lantern in hand, seeking a husband; but they have not yet found him.

The Marchioness Trasimeni did not long survive Tolla; she fell with the last leaves. Philip quitted the service, taking Menico for servant and friend. The misfortunes of Tolla had an unfortunate influence over him: he began to doubt of much that he had formerly believed, took to the society of strangers, and soon became a very indifferent Catholic. He was elected member of the Constituent Assembly, and died on the 3d of July 1849, on the walls of Rome. Menico met his end at the same time, and by his side. Amarella, a widow without having ever been a wife, lends on usury to the country-people at Velletri: money consoles her for everything. Cocomero is one of the finest specimens of the Neapolitan police. When he returned to his own country, he bore the marks of Dominique's knife.

Victor Feraldi has six children, of whom four are girls: the eldest of them lives with her grand-parents, and is named Tolla. The Count is the only person who ever

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revenged himself for Manuel's treachery. In 1841, three years after his daughter's death, he collected, as best he could, the letters of the two lovers, and had them printed in Paris, with a short statement of the facts connected with them. This narrative, consisting of about twenty-five pages, ends as follows—"May this true history serve as a useful lesson to parents, to young men with evil counsellors, and to young girls without experience."

The very day that this book made its way into Italy, Colonel Coromila had the whole edition bought up and destroyed; but tradition has, in default of history, perpetuated the remembrance of Tolla's misfortunes. The Church of the Holy Apostles, and the tomb of the poor loving girl, have become, on certain anniversaries, the resort of pilgrims; and more than one young Roman adds to her evening litanies, "Saint Tolla, virgin and martyr, pray for us!"

THE END.

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